

PROCESSED WORLD 30





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PROCESSED WORLD

Winter/Spring 1992-93 • Issue 30

ISSN 0735-9381

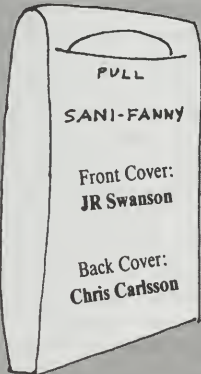
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Peter Lange



MICKEY D.

Ivana Mente

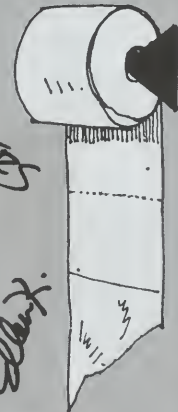
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SHITTING HEADS

After two centuries of nationhood and four decades of cold war and hysterical militarism we've become one sick society. The military empire built officially to combat foreign threats has produced a domestic society committed to police, prison, and control as its solution to social ills. From the rapid proliferation of "security" jobs to the increasing criminalization of ever wider groups of people, the militarization of our daily lives penetrates deeper than ever.

* * * *

On April 30, 1992, San Francisco underwent an abrupt sea change. Response to the Simi Valley acquittals of the cops who beat Rodney King blazed across San Francisco too. There had been a continuous flow of rumors and coffee breaks that day; on May 1st work almost ground to a halt while people talked about the verdict. Discussion of looting led to talk of poverty and racism—topics usually off-limits in corporate America. The late afternoon financial district was spookily quiet and empty. The public transit system had closed early. Bay Area "Rapid" Transit had locked its gates to "immobilize looters."

Confrontations with police erupted around the Civic Center and spread through downtown. Scattered looting, some planned, some random, began

blocks away from the "political" riot; in other places an orgy of looting was in progress.

By the next day the mood had shifted—more fear, more condemnation, more footage on the violence against passers-by in Los Angeles, more portrayals of the rebellion as racial thuggery. But people were still talking. At least some of the racial barriers had eroded—black and white people talking about race and rebellion! Together! There was much excitement about a demonstration planned in the Mission District (a neighborhood of Latinos, Asians, and students) that night.

The police swept the Mission, netting hundreds of people, hauling them off in groups large and small, then processing them in a pier warehouse. Most were released 36 hours later, after being hauled to another county and subjected to standard prison abuses. It was an eye-opening experience for many, a civics lesson not included in your "good citizen" curriculum; police are petty-minded thugs and inept bureaucrats. One angry white protester, threatened with arrest if he didn't stand on the sidewalk, screamed back, "This is a fascist state!" A young black woman wryly comments, "Welcome to America, honey."

Across the bay, Berkeley is in a chronic state of alert. Last year the University of California renewed its 25-year assault on People's Park and built a swank volleyball court—allegedly for the students, but clearly with an eye towards removing street people, concerts, and other unwanted disturbances to public order. Since then there have been many clashes, some sabotage, and a little bit of volleyball played in what the county sheriff called "the world's largest catbox." Police helicopters overhead announce confrontations louder than the media. Telegraph Avenue, judging by its copious plywood barriers over windows and squads of riot cops, is prepared for low-level insurgency. The authorities demonstrate once again that a heavy police presence can "maintain calm."

Recent civil disturbances—a.k.a. "riots"—are the steam escaping from the pressure cooker of modern urban life. Las Vegas (notably), Toronto, New York, Seattle, Atlanta, and Washington DC have all erupted. In San Francisco there was rage, much of it misdirected, most of it inarticulate, but not blind. White people did not fear attack at the hands of a "wilding" black mob as the

SAN FRANCISCO



ONE NEAT CITY

media would have us believe; anger was directed where it belonged, at the cops.

As the disparity between worlds ("1st" and "3rd," rich and poor) grows we will "need" more police and jails. "We" will explore new dimensions of the national security state. "Our" Army, too, may find its greatest use at home, even while the Pentagon is lusting to be Texas Ranger to the world.

This militarization of everyday life—surveillance cameras, new technologies, US army raids on marijuana patches, loss of basic rights (most notably, 4th Amendment protections against search and seizure)—affects us all. Fearing theft and assault, people become suspicious of one another. We are driven apart when authority is internalized. The old joke about "Help the Police: Beat Yourself Up" is closer to reality than fantasy. Pressure to snitch on neighbors, family and co-workers will continue: because they have a TV they didn't have before the riots, because they smoke funny stuff, because they have unapproved sexual preferences. And at any minute the police may arrive. Even the wrong address, or a lying call from a vindictive neighbor can bring the "innocent" into abrupt—even fatal—confrontation with the forces of Law 'n' Order.

The people of Rio know what it is to be confronted by such forces; the tanks were called out to protect Ecocrats from reality at the recent "summit" conference. In addition to soldiers lining roads, the government literally swept up many of the street children that inhabit Rio, who are subject, even in "ordinary" times, to death squads. Giving us insight on the June '92 Earth Summit is Jon Christensen and associates, who voyaged there carrying *PW* credentials. He has also provided reviews of "Books that won't save the earth." He and Primitivo Morales cross words in an exchange on Intellectual Property Rights and their utility in the "developing" world.

On a related ecological front we interview Judi Bari, long-time labor agitator and Earth First'er in "A Shit Raiser Speaks." Those who ponder the possibility of death squads in this country might consider the vicious bombing (and press campaign) directed against her and Daryl Cherney, a bombing still unsolved but clearly linked to her political activity—as she explains. In addition to exploring her current organizing, she talks about her time served in the

PROCESSING . . .



graphic by J.F. Baudier

regimented factory of the post office. "Avon Calling" is a factory Tale of Toil which looks at a slightly different role that "temps" play in the modern economy. "God's Work" examines the world of paid care for the elderly and resistance to work abuse in Jeff Kelly's Tale of Toil.

Dehumanizing and pointless work (illustrated on our cover by JRS—returning from his "Vacation" on issue #25) is also analyzed at some length in other articles. Chris Carlsson's "What Work Matters?" calls for a new approach to organizing, moving from an attack on traditional unionism to a reevaluation of the work being done. He also reviews "American Dream," the documentary on the '86-'87 Hormel strike in Austin, MN. Mickey D's review of "The Overworked American" also probes the weak points of "labor" critiques: which work is worth doing? "911" gives a fictional (we hope) account of how overwork stymies "family values." "The Rustbelt Archipelago" (by P.M., the author of *Bolo-Bolo*—see issue #17) looks at the reinvention of former factory cities, with particular attention to the former Soviet Union and "time on the job."

Adam Cornford's "Processed Shit," a trenchant dissection of American racism and cultural definitions of good and bad, reveals that the recent LA riots are not some isolated event, but part of our legacy. The "Martian View of Looting" lightheartedly looks at consumerism, work and deprivation. In "Thrifters: Second Hand Shit," Marina Lazzara takes us into a surreal Sunday sidewalk sale.

Iguana Mente's "Confessions of a Sperm Donor" recounts one of the more curious jobs we've reported on. D.S. Black proffers a double-fistful of reviews

of sex magazines. Our "Downtime" section introduces the Time Thieves Corner, and more. Our excellent letters—thanks all you writers—offer a glimpse of the connections percolating out there. Also from our mailbox is a paean from The Chicago Surrealists Group to the recent Chicago floods. An expanded section of poetry utilizes diverse styles in exploring equally diverse topics, ranging from old women to People's Park to the office—and beyond. And Primitivo drags the Old Crow into the (almost) 21st century in his parodic "The Ravin'."

Thanks to the great response by readers to our pleas and improved circulation at the newsstand, *PW* is almost not broke! Note our increased size—a direct reflection of the wealth of printed material we have received. Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue through work, money, word-of-mouth, or general subversion! We couldn't do it without ya!

It looks like "Education" is happenin' in our next issue. . . we've got a number of educational articles and short stories, and are hoping for more analyses and Tales of Toil. . . Write to *Processed World*, 41 Sutter St #1829, SF, CA, 94104 Fax us at (415) 626-2685 E-Mail us at pwmag@well.sf.ca.us. Future issues might also include Voluntarism and the Service Economy; The 21st Century: A Two-Tiered Future; Millennial Blues; the Urban Utopia—what kind of city would we like to live in? What changes would we make? Past topics are still very much alive—comments, rebuttals and new explorations of sex, biotech, exile, "The Good Job," etc., are all welcome. Write! Draw! Enjoy!

— Primitivo Morales, et. al.

LETTERS

WHY NOT HERE?

Dear Editors:

I am only in the middle of my second issue of *Processed World*. Oh how I wish I had found your magazine earlier! Maybe I could have escaped my materialistic consumerism-driven middle class (maxed out on my credit cards) existence a little earlier. But to do what? I hungrily devour everything in your magazine, but all it does is come back up in a kind of wet burp. I've read the letters from people of my generation—yes we're all aimless, seemingly apathetic, brain dead from years of watching the Brady Bunch and thinking life's problems would always be solved by mom and dad's neat little catch-all phrases (Mom always said, "don't play ball in the house!"). We should have known better—I mean, did you ever see Mike or Carol Brady actually *working* at anything? Of course they were good parents, not like our own that slaved away to provide us with our Barbie Dolls and our G.I. Joes, then took their work frustrations out on us without realizing that Barbie Dolls didn't spiritually satisfy us, anyway (they were too busy thinking the swimming pool in the backyard and the station wagon in the driveway would make *them* happy). All of this throbbing pulsating energy, all of this dissatisfaction just eating away at our insides—can't we channel it somehow? Are we that impotent or have we just been brainwashed by the powers that be to believe we are? The government wants to get rid of radical art, eradicate mind-expanding drugs, abolish anything that will actually make us more aware and wake us up to how we're being screwed, but the question is: Will anything wake us up?

Let's look at L.A. and the recent riots. All of the pent-up frustrations, the anger, the fear that these people have been living with, the disempowerment they've had to deal with erupted with one foul swoop of an unjust verdict. But instead of channeling that anger towards the people and institutions that deserve it, the rioters and looters destroyed their *own* community! I bet Buchanan, Bush and the fascists that run our country got a big chuckle over that one. For years they've been allowing guns and crack to circulate freely through big city minority communities, just waiting for them to wipe themselves out. Now they make a token effort by pouring money, ever the capitalists' solution, on the problem. You can't buy self-esteem. The children of the middle class learned that lesson the hard way. A very wise friend of mine believes L.A. was just the foreshadowing of a future civil/race war. To me, that would be a misdirected revolution! How would those of us who are white and therefore represent the power structure let the other side know, "Hey! We're with *you*!" Any full-scale revolt needs to be organized

and with full cooperation of blacks *and* whites, rich *and* poor, anyone who's sick and tired of what our system has become (and don't fool yourself into thinking a vote for Ross Perot is truly an attempt to overhaul the system!).

This country is a powder keg ready to erupt, and I am ready for it. It can't happen soon enough for me. I've been watching the events in Eastern Europe, wondering why it can't happen here. Citizens sat back for too long while their leaders ran amuck, oppressing them by instituting controls over everything they saw, said, did, heard, while at the same time bestowing special favors on themselves (look at the Congressional check kiting scandal) and breeding corruption (see Contragate, the S&Ls, BCCI, Clarence Thomas hearings) JUST AS OUR OWN GOVERNMENT IS DOING NOW. Finally the corrupt Communist governments got their comeuppance. Just because we live in a so-called "Democracy" don't think "It can't happen here." I'm hoping that *Processed World* can go further than you do now (and I know this is an awesome responsibility for one publication to bear—*[no kidding!—eds.]*) and help organize the revolt when/if it comes. Grumbling about your crappy jobs and the state of our society is fine, but when push comes to shove you'd better be ready to make a change.

I just quit my job last Friday. I spent a year (any more and I would have been brain dead) working for a big business trade association, doing things like xeroxing memos to business owners telling them why they needed to support the styrofoam industry (never mind that if the environment goes, we all go with it, and then where will you relocate your business? To the moon, maybe?) and lobby against national health care, etc. At first I thought it didn't matter that I didn't believe in anything my employer represented, but the constant stomach aches, headaches, and depression I felt told me otherwise. Your job can be detrimental to your health—I'm living proof. I'm not sure what I'll do now but I do know I've never felt better in my life.

I *almost* didn't write this letter. I had to overcome the fear that now the FBI will put my name in some kind of "radical" file and when they implement the internment of radical thinkers (like some kind of Soviet gulag), I'll be the first to go. But I've realized that that kind of fear will accomplish nothing. I say, more power to *Processed World* and its readers—go forth without fear, my children.

S.W.—Richmond, Virginia

POLL TAX SABOTEUR

Dear Process World(ers),

I've been impressed by several back issues which a friend lent to me. One of the most interesting and

heartening features of *PW* is the letters page: it's so good to see that there are people out there trying to fuck over "the system." I thought I might add a new voice to the saboteurs' chorus.

I moved to the U.S. from Liverpool, England in 1987, after spending most of my time since leaving school in dead-end jobs: factories, clerical etc. In 1990 I returned to Britain for a few months, reluctantly in search of a job. All I could find was a temp job sending out the first Poll Tax bills. Along with about ten other people I was expected to take addresses and ID numbers off a computer printout, and copy it onto the forms which would then be sent to the victims. The recipients of the forms were advised to quote the ID number in future correspondence. I happily spent seven hours a day writing the wrong numbers on all of the forms whilst getting paid. Toward the end of the contract I went for a few drinks with some of my co-workers, and discovered that they had been doing the same thing. Our combined efforts must have created about 50,000 future problems for the poll tax system. This one could run and run...!

I'm now back in the U.S. and trying to destabilize everything.

Yours frater(mi)nally,
M.L.—Lewiston, Maine

MASTER ELECTRICIAN: HIGH PROLE

Dear *PW*,

What a delightful magazine! From it I discovered how un-unique I am. It seems I've stumbled into a beehive of malcontents, that is, frustrated artists and intellectuals. What a treat! Bohemia is alive and well, though processed through the postal system.

I'm a blue-collar worker by accident. After attending a college prep school, with four years of Latin, French, and English, I wanted to be an interpreter. After a couple years in college, I joined the navy with the hopes of more schooling and eventual duty hobnobbing in global circles as a translator. Instead they decided I'd make a better electrician, and, 26 years later, I'm still an electrician. However, I'm a high prole, or as Paul Fussler described us in *Class*: "...they're not consumed with worry about choosing the correct status emblems, these people can be remarkably relaxed and unself-conscious. They can do, say, wear, and look like pretty much anything they want without undue feelings of shame, which belongs to their betters, the middle class, shame being largely a bourgeois feeling."

As a master construction electrician, I have certain liberties not found with lower proles and middle class, namely, I don't have a supervisor. I supervise myself. Nor do I go to the same building every day and punch a clock. I wire buildings and leave when I'm done. Two years ago, for instance, after wiring a district educational building for nearly a year, I left for Eastern Europe for a month.

I get no benefits, such as medical insurance, sick days, paid vacation and the like. Instead they begrudgingly pay me \$27.09 an hour. On the other hand, I tell the boss for how long and when I'm going on vacation. Sometimes I don't show up for work; maybe it's simply too cold outside, or perhaps I have a bad hangover. I never use an alarm clock. For eight years, from 9- to 17-years-old, I delivered the *Chicago Tribune* at the beck and call of an alarm

"IN YOUR FACE BRUTALITY!"

--Joel Siegel, GOOD MORNING AMERICA

"A POWERFUL FILM THAT'S NOT BASED ON ONE TRUE STORY, IT'S BASED ON MILLIONS OF THEM."

--SISKEL & EBERT

"A TERRIFYING, URBAN FAIRY TALE WITH A LOT OF PHYSICAL VERVE!"

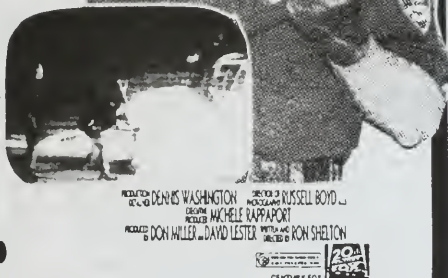
--Kenneth Turdd, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"WE NEED BIGGER GUNS!"

--Darryl Yeats

WHITE MEN CAN JUMP...

ON TOP OF YOU AND STOMP THE LIVING CRAP OUT OF YOU!



R RACIALLY DISASTROUS

NOW ON VIDEO!

clock. In snow, sleet, and darkness, I delivered like clockwork. I promised myself that when I became an adult I'd never use an alarm clock, and I don't. If I'm late for work, I readily explain that my body refused to wake up at the anointed hour, sorry. They get used to it in a short time. They learn that I'll show up, eventually.

More importantly, however, is not what I do, but rather where I've been and what I've seen. My work has not only taken me into the homes and offices of every strata of American society, I have also witnessed first-hand the daily bowel movement of America, the sewage treatment plant. And then there's work that I simply refuse to do, wire a house for a wealthy person, for example. I find wealthy people obnoxious and consumed with conspicuous gluttony. To install a \$5,000 fixture from the 20 foot ceiling in the entry of some lawyer's palatial mansion, while poor people fill the jails, goes against my grain. The incarcerated paid for that dangling brass and crystal with 60 some flickering candle-like bulbs (the bulbs alone are over \$300). Of course there's also the hot tub, pool, sauna, and the dumb waiter to carry firewood to the second and third floor fireplaces, to name but a few of the luxuries.

Interestingly, in the past year, I've seen the inside

of the jail as both an inmate (ten days for drunk driving), and as an electrician wiring a new guard station within the laundry facilities. The contrasting viewpoints exhibit a vivid portrait of class distinction. There were no lawyers, doctors, accountants, or advertising executives in jail. I was processed through the system with other drunk drivers—overwhelmingly blue collar workers—and drug dealers. We're considered the scum of society and treated as such. The guards, or correction officers as they like to call themselves, display tyrannical attitudes and enforce petty rules, such as proper bed-making, with the utmost seriousness.

To enforce their rules, there are a half dozen jails in town, each one worse than the next. The already bad food gets worse as does the confinement and rules. People who consistently violate the rules are sent down the ladder till eventually they're in solitary confinement with little more than bread and water.

A few months later, as an electrician going to jail every day to do construction, the view was much different. Instead of inside looking up, now I was outside looking down. The guards, no longer masters of my destiny, became bottom of the barrel unskilled proletarians. As one guard told me after I asked him if he experienced much inmate trouble, "Naw, we're

just babysitters. Most of these guys are harmless drunks and drug users."

Yours Truly,

J.A.—Portland, Oregon

EXISTENTIALIST WHINING!

To Whom It May Concern:

Please cancel my subscription to *Processed World*. Your magazine has a good premise—alienation—but the execution falls short. It's the Revenge idea that bothers me. I'm experienced enough to know that in revenge, make sure the screwing that you give is worth the screwing that you will inevitably get.

It's hard to be optimistic in modern society—managers that don't, friends that aren't, take-home pay that can't, but JESUS why make it worse? If you hate that job so badly, quit. If your boss is a jerk, welcome to the club.

Your 'zine shows a lot of talent. Too bad it's hard to see it through all the weird, existentialist whining about wage-slavery.

Sincerely,

C.H.—Aspen, Colorado

SURVIVING THE DULL HOURS

Processed Dudes—

You guys & gals are so great—you've been such an inspiration to me. I'd never have survived my dead-end job at the University of California without your moral support.

During the dull hours—the *especially* dull hours—I cranked out propaganda, such as the sticker [reprinted below]. I then used UC's campus mail system to send them to Regents, university presidents, cafeteria dishwashers, and executive secretaries. For a while they sprouted like beautiful weeds on campuses from San Diego to L.A. & beyond.

Keep it up!

R.F.—Berkeley, California



UP AGAINST IT!

Dear PW,

I just picked up *PW* and I really want you to know how much I enjoyed it. Unfortunately, my partner and I are truly "UP AGAINST IT." I spent most of yesterday agonizing about whether to engage our family in the teeth of federal and state bureaucracy

and apply for aid at Social Services. We don't want "aid," we want jobs, but...oh hell.

After reading several of the articles in *PW*, I noticed that I was feeling things I hadn't felt since *High School!* There was an idealism about changing our society that existed within me when I was much younger, and I guess I've lost it along the way without even realizing it. (Scary!) So I stand in your debt for turning my consciousness upside down and backwards (towards my own past) although I can't say yet where this might lead. Survival presses and leaves little room for any thought or feeling about the Bigger Picture, at least for now.

My favorite *PW* item remains Tom Tomorrow cartoons, especially the one on page 38 (#29), with the guy's watch beeping. I laugh, but it hurts.

Anyway, here's to the future, however dark, and thanks again for allowing me to plug into *PW*. I applaud your efforts.

Faye Manning—Springfield, OR

P.S. If 75% of *PW*'s budget comes from subscriptions, where does the 25% come from?? [distributor/bookstore sales, the occasional donation and loan—Many thanks to the 5 people who recently bought \$150 lifetime subscriptions. It made a big difference in financing this issue—eds.]



ABSOLUTE SILENCE.

from *Adbusters Quarterly*, 1243 W. 7th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1B7 Canada.
The liquor company threatened to sue for this subversion of their advertising campaign, but has not done so as yet.

RESPONSIBILITY... A Winning Solution

Yo, Fellow PoMo Proles!

I came across *Bad Attitude: The Processed World Anthology* while browsing in a local alternative bookstore. I knew instantly that it was some kind of chop-busting satirical masterpiece, cast in the blithe spirit of the Church of Bob. But it took me a couple of leavings and returnings before I finally got a fix on your politics, and it all made sense.

A week later, I heard an editor interviewed on the radio. That interview nailed it. I took a deep breath, coughed up the \$20, and reeled in this queer fish, still heaving and panting on the deck. I've discovered that as long as I store it in the freezer, I don't have to

continue holding my breath!

But seriously...thanks for one of the most uproarious and xeroxable fonts of wit, wisdom, mayhem, mischief and subversion that I've ever blundered upon by happy happenstance. You might be curious to know something about my situation (Tough tuna...I'll tell you anyway!):

I have two college degrees, including a graduate degree in literature from Yale, and I spent the last twelve years working as a professional typesetter and freelance writer. 15 months ago, my full-time paying gig with a once-politically-alternative newspaper, where ten years ago we used to smoke pot on lunch break, but which now supports itself by running pages of phone sex ads, finally fell apart. I spent the following year trying to get a simple clerical position, preferably at one of the five colleges here in depression-wracked western Massachusetts.

With two college degrees, 100 wpm typing, high computer literacy, and 12 years full-time office experience, I was nevertheless LITERALLY UNABLE TO LAND A JOB—ANY JOB WHATSOEVER—for 15 months. We're talking about hundreds of custom tailored resumes filed, with about six interviews actually obtained for all that wasted effort.

My most memorable interview was with the lady who runs the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds. She had advertised for what amounted to a "gofer/photocopier" position. Embarrassed, she held up a huge stack of more than a hundred resumes.

"I really felt I owed you an interview," she said. "But I'm embarrassed to be talking to you." Almost all of the applications in her stack were from college graduates. A minority were from starving Ph.D.s, clamoring to become gofers in the photocopy room.

Needless to say, this profoundly harrowing and sobering experience has re-colored my political complexion from PC pink to deep burning red. I am furious as hell about the way we're all being pushed and shoved and drawn and quartered by the leverage-driven corporate restructuring of our planet. If I believed in the death penalty, I would have no trouble arguing that Ronald Reagan ought to be shot for high treason.

Just to provide some closure on my personal odyssey, I was rescued from the brink of ruin at the last possible minute. I managed to land a job as an administrative paralegal, for an attorney who specializes in transportation law, with a large national client base. It's all civil and contract law, it's a completely clean practice, and the dude himself is a distinguished old school gentleman with a GREAT attitude toward his three paralegals. It's more like a family office than an adversarial battlefield. There is absolutely no backstabbing politics going on among the staff, and we even have paid medical insurance and profit sharing!

So I lucked out. My humanist background, Yale degree and exceptional computer skills put me on top of this particular stack. But it still took 15 months for me to get there. And the year I spent pounding the streets among the jobless has permanently changed my life. It's not only deepened my compassion for the folks who are getting screwed to death out there, but it's given me a new resolve to try to DO something about it, to the best of my ability.

There is the further telling irony that at a point in my life cycle when a typical Yale grad should be making a salary in at least the 50 to 60K range, I'm

celebrating my ability to land what amounts to an entry level position in a new field, at a salary level (20K) which would be considered low end for a BRAND NEW college graduate with no work history.

Still, a lot of people would kill for the relatively modest job I finally managed to land. I mean, shit, in the crumbling cities, people kill for SNEAKERS and JACKETS—never mind what they'd do for a job.

Into this challenging frame of reference in my life, your book suddenly drops, like a sinister angel appearing on my left shoulder. And it sets me to thinking about the degree to which your political message pertains, or does not, in these horribly depressed times.

Although I enjoyed your book immensely, it also bemuses me. In the office where I work now, *Bad Attitude* makes no sense. When you're treated with genuine decency and respect, and as a valued member of a team effort, what possible incentive can there be to sabotage this feeling of trust?

Am I going to blame this attorney for the fact that I'm only making 20K, when I should be making 60? Hell no. I made a choice to bypass the high-pressure career track, and opt for a human-sized lifestyle, many years ago. I stand by my decision, even though the upturned corporate economy of the New World Order (didn't Hitler call it "Mein Kampf?") now makes it likely that I will end up penniless and bereft of support in my old age.

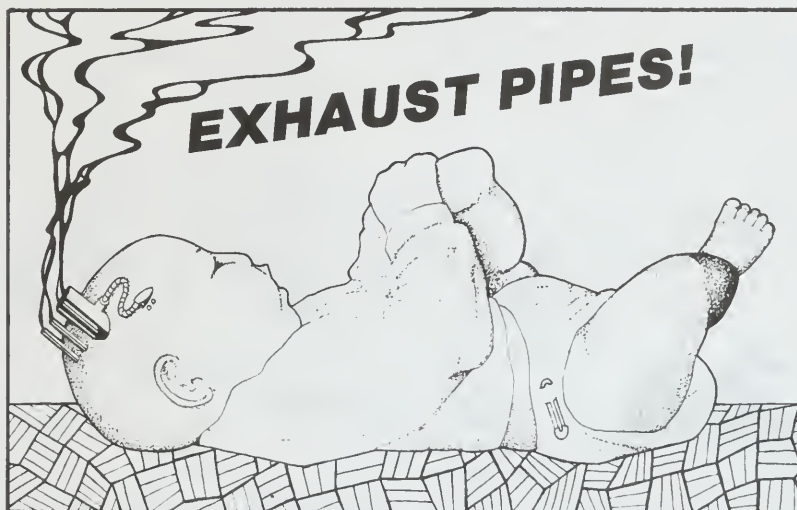
I'm certainly not the only one though. Just wait until all the hell-on-wheels political activists of the '60s reach retirement age, and discover how badly they're being screwed and shoved around by their government. I predict here and now that we will see a sudden wrathful last-burst-of-glory rekindling of their youthful social agitation, activism, and organizational savvy, turned against an entirely new set of social grievances in the year 2010. Count on it! The baby boomers are not about to trudge meekly down the path of impecunious oblivion plotted for them by the junk bond bandits who looted our treasury. There will be blood in the streets when they find themselves 65 and starving.

Finally, from my own office experience, past and present, I think I can say that the impulse to assume *Bad Attitude* lies not in the inherent nature of process work itself, but in the particular quality of one's human relationships with both employers and peers.

What I hear again and again, as I read through *Bad Attitude*, is the degree to which the contributing workers are treated abominably by fellow humans, who insist on acting as though they were robotic agents of some extraterrestrial force. The problem of alienation is not inherent with the new technology. The problem is inherent with human beings who have simply forgotten how to ACT like human beings—if they even learned that human role as children in the first place.

Human beings at their best are irreverent, humorous and caring, as well as justly proud of their natural competence, and hungry for a community of mutual support. When any or all of these tendencies are crushed by the debased nature of an employment situation, that situation becomes diabolical. And if *Bad Attitude* is the most natural, gut-gratifying response, I hardly think it's the most fulfilling or productive approach to making this planet human

BABIES BEING BORN WITH



graphic by S. Devaney/C.C.

PARENTS! Protect your newborn with the amazing revolutionary **Human Tissue Filter!**
Snaps on in seconds! Lasts for Hours! Order Yours Today! Don't Delay!
DIAL 1-800-WAA-COUGH

editorial letters and "APazines" or drone-work for The Corporation. I'm known for the speed at which I get my job done, and through my nine years here I've been given steady raises and more diversified responsibilities (i.e., not just mindless typing) as well as perks (free books, free invites to various yuppie-affairs, etc.) and a credible reputation. I'm usually relatively discreet about my hobbies, which has let me get away with a lot without pissing anybody off. I come from a frugal family, and I'm anal-retentively organized, which means I've saved the company lots of money on things like office and household supplies (all of which I'm now in charge) and can therefore splurge on supplies for myself now and again (I'm not a conspicuous consumer, so there aren't a lot of material things I crave).

I'm also in charge of hiring temps, sometimes to replace me if I take a mental health or actual sick day, which brings me to the main reason I'm writing: the story in your DOWNTIME! section called "Paperslutting" by Stella. This really pissed me off, and started me to wondering, if her *Bad Attitude* is what *PW* readers are supposed to admire and emulate, maybe *PW* and I have grown apart in recent years; the thought saddens me.

Stella is correct in thinking of herself as a paper slut. Despite the good folks at COYOTE [Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics, a prostitute's rights group], and people like Jane in your Sabotage section, I would think many prostitutes have rather low images of themselves, and this, obviously, contributes to the already-low image others have of them. Perhaps Stella was attempting to "reclaim" a word that commonly has a negative connotation, but it didn't seem like it to me. It seemed like she just didn't give a shit about anything other than pride in what she could get away with by being nasty and "subversive" to some faceless corporation.

Let me tell you something, Stella—I'm not a faceless corporation. I'm a cog in the machine just

like you. My machine happens to be shinier than a lot of others I know, and believe me, I'm happy about that. It's nice not to have a totally shitty job, to get four weeks plus sick time plus medical bennies plus "stolen back" time. It's not cushy, it's not earth-shaking, but it's a decent living. When I hire a temp to help me or sub for me, I'm the one who has to "clean up" after her/him. If he/she fucks up the system, they're not fucking the corporation, they're fucking *me*. My corporation may be paying for a good time (i.e., an 8-hour day) from Stella Slut, but I'm the one getting abused in the end.

It's hard for me to attempt common courtesy with someone apparently out to treat her peers as shittily as she expects (and wants?) to be treated herself, but come on, Stella. I'm not your enemy. I'm not a bureaucrat, I'm a flesh and blood person just like you. I don't treat temps like dirt; when I call a temp agency, I expect intelligent people with common sense to help me out with my overflow. If I'm in, I'll give temps a tour of the house, sometimes I go to lunch with them, and I don't assign people monumental tasks (I leave those for myself). A temp isn't working for me, she/he is working with me. You, however, are working against me, and it's just not fair for me to, say, come back from vacation and have to clean up your shit. I don't deserve it. And you, Stella, deserve a better self-image. But do all us workers with civility a favor—get out of temping first.

Thanks for letting me say my piece.
E.W.C.—Brooklyn, New York

JUST GO OUT OF BUSINESS!

Dear *Processed World*,
Thanks for *PW*, which made good holiday reading. I regret, however, that I must turn down your appeal for a subscription, since I note that *PW* makes no provision for paying writers.

and whole again.

I do find it at once supremely ironic, and supremely hopeful, that so many of your contributors who find themselves stuck in "dead-end" or "meaningless" jobs turn out to be such gifted and eloquent writers, in so many different genres—from acute political analysis to side-splitting, pants-wetting comedy! It's clear that your contributors are not bubble-gum-snapping functional illiterates, condemned by paucity of wit or genetic endowment to a life of minimum wage slavery. There is just an ENORMOUS pool of creative talent in this nation, begging to be put to work on a worthy human enterprise.

It seems as though we're waiting for the charismatic leadership we badly need to turn this American community around. We are all leaders, of course. As a devout Buddhist myself, as well as a humanist-oriented bisexual man, I might find it somewhat easier than a Marxist ideologue to see the lurking potential for human personhood in even the most mind-numbed bureaucratic buttfuck, if one can just locate the resonant frequency where his or her humanity can be accessed.

I'd say your book is a clarion call to our troubled humanity, sounding an alarm on all known hailing frequencies! I'm glad I found you. And I'm glad I finally found a job that put the 20 bucks in my pocket, which I could spend on such a guilty and unjustifiable piece of discretionary pleasure, in these depressed and starving times.

Bad Attitude, of course, would prompt a bitter prole to "Steal This Book." And how, pray tell, would you folks feel about being ripped off like that, considering what you invested to write and publish it? [Well, we're more interested in people reading it than paying for it, if we have to choose—eds.]

You see, that's my point. *Bad Attitude* solves nothing in the long run. Responsibility for each other, and for the consequences of our actions, and for the quality of our commitments, has got to be the winning solution that brings us home to our humanity.

In the meantime, and on your own terms, you're one of the best reads I've encountered in years. Your book is a wonderful meal to nourish the spirit of compassionate mischief that keeps our humanity alive. Write on!

In love and solidarity,
D.D.B.—Amherst, Massachusetts

A TIME THIEF VS. THE PAPER SLUT

Dear *PW* Crew:

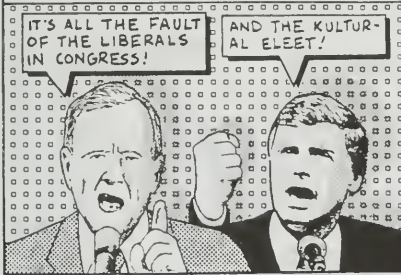
I'm (still) a secretary in a sales office located in a beautiful brownstone building in Loisaída (Lower East Side, or "the East Village" as the trendies term it), Manhattan. I'm not compartmentalized in a cubicle, I mostly work on my own (though not always at a leisurely pace) and, although I work long hours, I manage to "steal back" enough time and resources (use of my computer, the fax and photocopier, etc.) to make up for a somewhat fair but (subjectively) low salary. I manage to put out various 'zines for four amateur press alliances (APAs) to which my husband and I currently belong, and I put out two newsletters—one for ten years, one for six—largely on "office time."

I was raised with a good work ethic, which means I take care and pride in everything I do, whether it's

RECYCLE MAIL-ART

THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

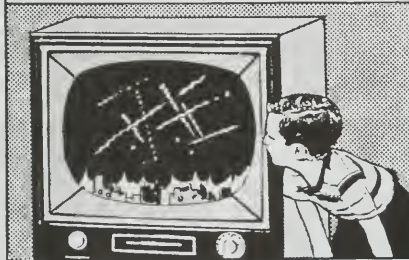
WITH OUR ECONOMY CONTINUING TO FALTER, OUR INFRASTRUCTURE COLLAPSING, AND OUR LEADERS UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN **SOUND BITES** AND **SOLUTIONS**, THESE ARE UNDENIABLY DIFFICULT TIMES IN AMERICA...



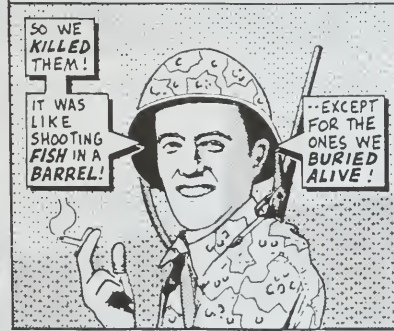
THINGS WERE CERTAINLY DIFFERENT LAST YEAR! THE NATION WAS SWEEPED UP IN A WAVE OF SELF-CONGRATULATORY **EUPHORIA** IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE **GULF WAR**!



THAT WE **DID**! BY SOME ESTIMATES, AS MANY AS 100,000 IRAQIS--CIVILIANS AS WELL AS SOLDIERS--DIED DURING THOSE SIX WEEKS! SURE, THEY MAY HAVE BEEN HUMAN BEINGS... WITH HOMES AND FAMILIES AND DREAMS... PEOPLE MUCH LIKE US, ACTUALLY...



...BUT THEY WERE OUR **ENEMIES**! PRESIDENT BUSH SAID SO!



documents at law firms, ad agencies, government departments, and corporate offices, including terminal meetings and bins of word processed paper, to the internal process temps develop to make it through the day, i.e. stolen paper clips, long-distance phone calls, clandestine xeroxes, printer time, and mental notes made in spare moments. The creative process is included too, which is perhaps the strangest and most interesting of all.

Your friend from the East Village,
L.W.—New York, New York

TATER COUCH RAVE #1

Dear *Processed World*,

It's not something that comes immediately to mind as I sit on the couch watching the latest network rerun or the Lawrence Welk show on my local PBS station, KQED. I'm even less apt to consider it while checking out the late night sex shows like *Studs* or *Love Connection*. And I'm much too busy studying the newscaster's receding hairline during the nightly news to remember this little piece of trivia. But it's written into the law books, and I should be thinking about it a lot more; for that matter, everyone within earshot of any broadcasting outlet should. *The airwaves are public property.*

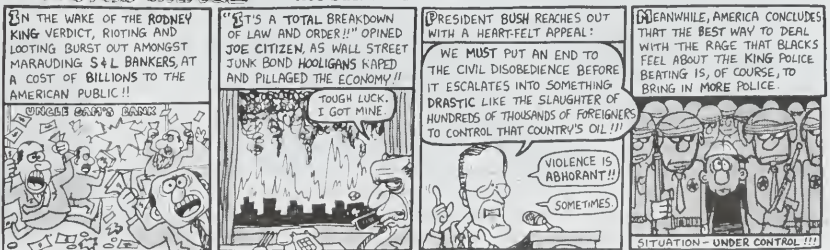
This place we call America, where the bonds are breaking down faster than a commercial break, and people are frustrated and ignorant (unless they make an extra special effort to find information, and who's got the time?), lest we forget, this place is the only one most of us have got. Regardless of how we got here, most of us have nowhere else to go. And

regardless of our assets, we have been taught that we have certain inalienable rights, like free speech, the pursuit of happiness, liberty, all that.

Well what good is free speech if nobody can hear me? And how can I ever pursue happiness if I don't have enough money for a new car? And liberty? We won't even get into that...The fact remains: television is warping me and it's already gotten to most of my friends.

It is only through ongoing struggle by educators and other early activists that the imperative to serve the "public interest" has been considered in broadcast regulation in the U.S. The creation of PBS and the allocation of radio stations for educational use was the result of people organizing and demanding that the airwaves be used constructively. It was, again, through people organizing at the onset of cable television that public access television came into being. And it will be, again, through people organizing that we, as a public, will have the right to decide what is going to come at us through the

TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1992



airwaves that *belong to us.*

With the incredible advances in technology of the last decade, and the equally swift advances in the monopolization of the media industry, the time may be upon us to start thinking of how we would like to see our media landscape progress. The networks have lost much of their power and many of their departments—most notably, news departments—are in decline. Is it really that far out to consider public access to the broadcast airwaves? Why should General Electric, Westinghouse and the rest of those big bad companies control our major communication arteries? They told us in elementary school that this was a democracy, so we ought to demand that they allow us to inform one another, the way that participants in a democracy must.

Yours truly,

Tater Tot—San Francisco, California

NOBLE EFFORTS

Dear *PW*:

I just picked up #29 and especially liked the excerpts from the *Sabotage* book. How creative people at work can be! I've worked as an underling in so many capacities, I definitely find that working class jobs are more humane than office jobs. When I was working a printing press, all that counted was my skill and output. Now, in my present job, I must dress and act "right" which really drives me up the wall. It's almost like skill and output are secondary in the office world. Well, you've heard it all before. Luckily, I have and have had many fine managers who think like I do on this point.

Thanks for your often noble efforts.

Sincerely,

L.M.—San Francisco, California

SEEKS ALTERNATIVE WORK

Dear *PW*:

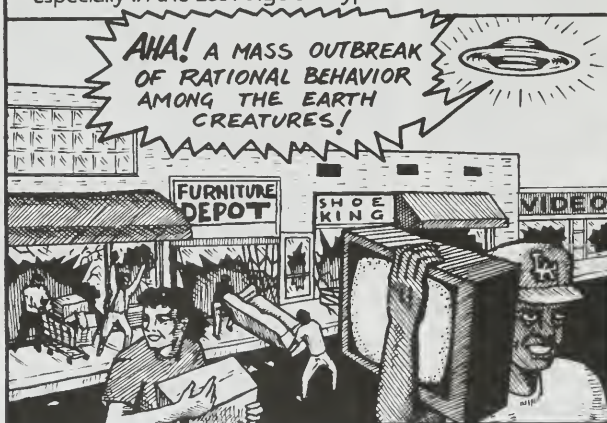
I'm seeking an alternative work environment. I was working downtown doing temp work, word processing, etc. (which I detested, but the pay was decent). I decided to get away from that type of work situation entirely and got a job working in a cafe. I liked the cafe job very much at first and in contrast to the other work I had been doing, because, although the work was demanding in different ways and the pay was low, there seemed to be much more freedom to just be myself and not to have to dress up and play a role that wasn't authentic. But, unfortunately, I had to quit that job recently due to sexual harassment from the owner and other unfair and humiliating practices. So I thought this would be a good time to write.

Thank you.

B.M.—San Francisco, California



From April 29 to May 2, 1992 (Earth calendar), my crew and I observed thousands of earthlings seizing and redistributing goods from public display stations, especially in the Los Angeles cityplex.



Earth society is peculiar! The inhabitants produce everything they need in their factories and farms, but these products are not simply passed out to everyone.

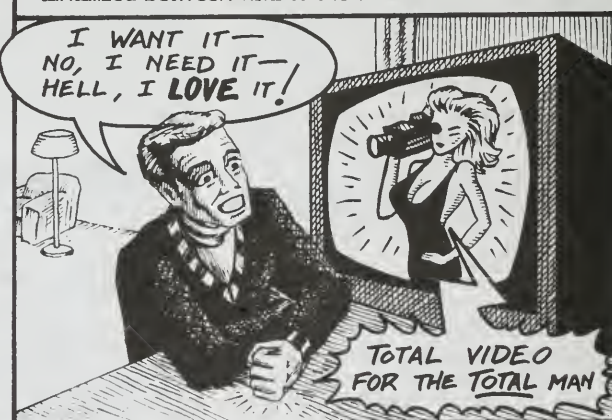


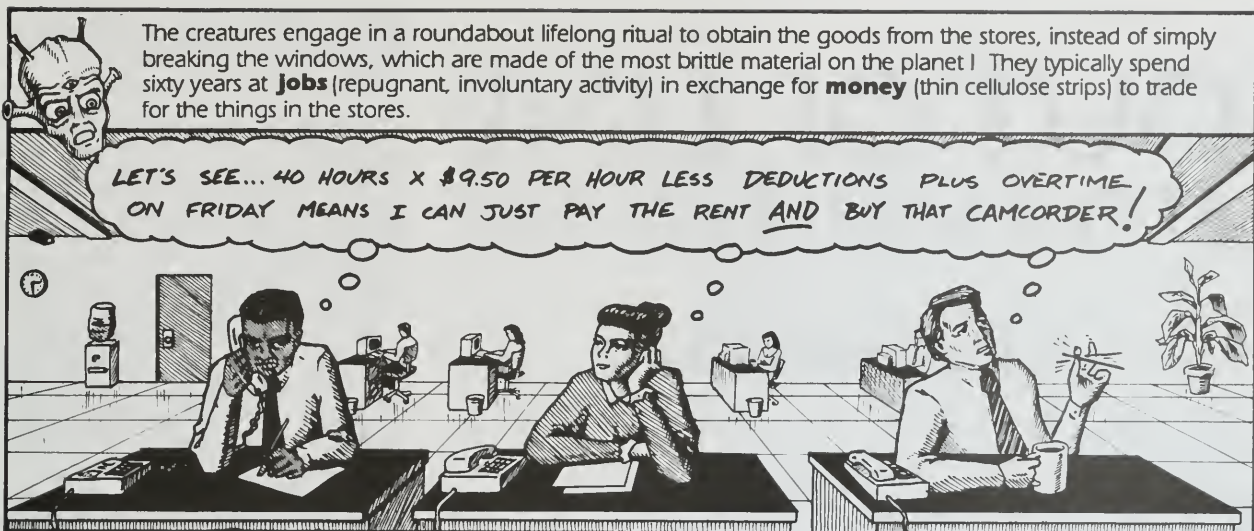
Instead, the goods are enclosed in stores whose front walls are made of **windows** (thin, transparent membranes).



The windows separate the products from the creatures while keeping them continually tantalized.

The earthlings also spend five hours every evening viewing images of their objects on **televisions** (thin, opaque membranes), which keeps them further tantalized between visits to the windows.

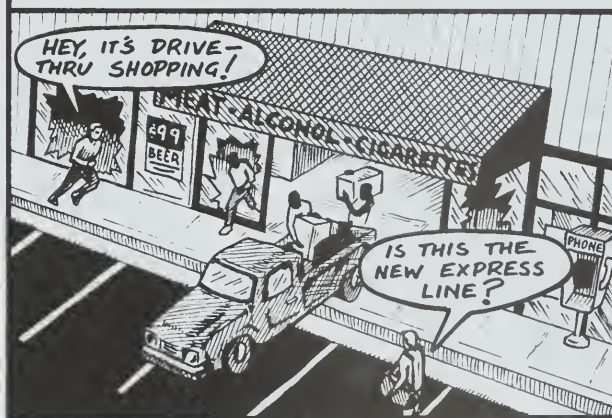




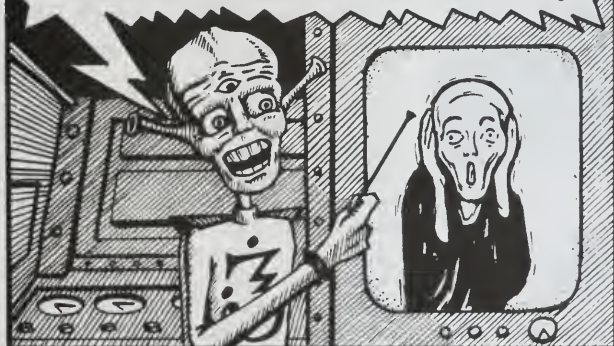
Earlier Mart'ian expeditions had observed infants in stores grabbing for objects until a parent earthling trained them with bizarre vocal spasms about the universal money-object relationship.



However, during the festive events of April 29 to May 2, the creatures reverted to a sensible form of behavior—they communally seized the goods through the windows instead of submitting to money-shopping.



THE PRESENT JOBS-MONEY-SHOPPING SOCIAL ORDER HAS TURNED THE EARTH INTO AN ALIEN PLANET WHERE THE EARTHLINGS NEVER FEEL AT HOME! THE LOOTING FESTIVALS ARE A RATIONAL, NATURAL CHALLENGE TO AN IRRATIONAL, UNNATURAL SOCIETY!



In conclusion, the creatures are gradually creating, as our Vulcan friends would say, a logical existence.



This space message was intercepted and decoded by the Social Club. Send two first-class stamps to us at 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Box 2200, Berkeley, CA 94704 for copies of our other outbursts.

OUT OF LINE AT THE EARTH SUMMIT:

A Processed Diary

RIO DE JANEIRO—Saturday, May 23: Having forgotten he needed a visa, the Special Agent had a hard time getting past Brazil's *policia federal* at the airport. Two \$20 bills tucked in his passport didn't help. But a wake up call to the consul general cleared things up. Then it was "Sim senhor, right this way," after that. The Special Agent was on a special mission for the Friendly Government.

After he got out of the shower, we had a few beers and watched Copacabana roar to life on the streets below the apartment we had rented for the duration. A thin spray of surf was visible at the end of a deep chasm, the avenida

leading to the beach.

The Special Agent got on the horn. Our first order of business was a powwow with Indian leaders over at the Hotel Novo Mundo. When we got there, they demanded fax machines, computers and printers. Lucky for us the Special Agent had been authorized to bring cash from the Friendly Government. We would be welcomed to the Indian village, Kari Oca.

We went over to the Hotel Nacional to adjust our gut microflora by immersing ourselves in a grand "feijoada," Brazil's national dish of black beans and all the pork that's not exported, rice, kale, yucca, and above all, *caipirinha*, cane liquor with lime juice, the key digestif.

As night fell, we strolled along the beach. Suddenly we were surrounded by three whores. One started rubbing my crotch. While I protested, another

lifted my wallet. It was a crash refresher course in street walking in Rio de Janeiro.

I'm up late watching looters emptying *supermercados* on TV news. "We are hungry," says one, "we have to sack." Children are waving pistols at the camera. The guns have names, says one teen with a revolver in each hand, and they have killed many times.

What will the environmentalists who are here for the big U.N. Conference on the Environment and Development have to say about all this? What do the environment and development *mean* in a city like Rio or Los Angeles, cities of the future? People want what they see on TV. And they are willing to riot to get their rights—not necessarily at city hall, but at the mini-mall. Television is beaming this message 'round the globe.

The Blade Runner just called from a pay phone. He is on his way over. So we're all here now. The Special Agent, the Blade Runner, and me, the Scribe. Oh yeah, and the Bodyguard. He

**Nobody talks about
movements anymore.
The latest line in
social engineering is
that ecological
principles should
organize the economy.**

watches over us so mercifully, I almost forgot him. Our assignment: the Earth Summit. Like everybody else here, we are on a self-inflated mission to the greatest meeting in human history, and our handles were chosen accordingly. The Blade Runner got his from the ease with which he cut through the set of Rio, just like it was his very own movie.

Monday, May 25: We finally had to get down to business today. The Special Agent asked us to cover him while he ran money to the Indians. And we had to get credentialed.

First, we learned how to walk the streets again. The Special Agent showed us his urban gunslinger walk, mental



Photos from Brazil by Jon Christensen

pistol in the shoulder holster, eyes roving like a cool lazy radar dish, taking in everything while slinking around the city like some kind of post-ecological Billy the Kid. Soon we were all doing it.

The offices for the Worldwide Indigenous Peoples Encounter and the official United Nations conference were in the same government tourism building downtown. At the UNCED office, Bronx-speaking guards and internationally accented secretaries ushered us quickly through the steps producing small white laminated photo ID cards. For the Indians, we had to run down the block to get photos, have lunch at a nearby bar while we waited, and finally we were issued a big orange medallion.

Anybody who is somebody here it seems has at least three different credentials hanging around the neck. Every meeting has its own symbolic totems of access. Like crossing borders, you need a passport.

At the consulate of the Friendly Government this morning, when the Special Agent stacked money for the Indians in a raggedly old bag given to him years ago by an Amazon shaman, a consular functionary intoned like a robot: I've never seen anything like this before. Neither had we.

We rented a car and drove out to the Indian encampment on the edge of town. Every couple of blocks we asked directions and finally found the site in an unused corner of a mental asylum, tucked in a lush forest under the surprising granite monoliths that rise around Rio. At the insistence of the Indian leaders, the city is stringing electricity out here so that indigenous people from around the world can meet, party, and type their agendas and statements into laptops late into the night. It is a local demonstration of their global clout.

I retreat to the Kari Oca bar to jot down notes. Desperately seeking any new angle, like most of the 7,000 journalists here, a Brazilian friend stops by and gets after me for a quote about the scene. It is a favorite shortcut, quoting other journalists.

"What are you doing here?" she asks. I try to explain *Processed World* but there is no adequate translation. "Processed" in Portuguese is *beneficiado*, benefitted or improved. But what if a process does not improve?

Thursday, May 28: I was in the *Jornal do Brasil* yesterday. It seems the Kari Oca bar is the hottest new spot in town. The proof: your faithful Scribe

from *Processed World*. "It's a tranquil place. You can even relax there among the confusion," said I.

I find myself agreeing more and more with a bumpersticker we saw here the other day: *Everybody has to believe in something. I believe I'll have another beer.* It could be the unofficial motto of Brazil.

The usually fresh, even if only slightly cool *Antarticas* slide down our throats one after the other as we reflect on Zoo 92, as one wag dubbed this happening. "Eco 92," as most people call it here, is a many ring circus. Everybody is putting on a big show to demonstrate their power. It's like Amazon headsmen who vie to throw the biggest party. They have to be here to be heard, to command resources in the New World Order. The roles are set in advance. What remains is to

We wondered why the Indians set up camp on the outskirts of town in a mental asylum. "The Indians and patients have a lot in common," explained a nurse. "They are both marginalized. They don't have their liberty. They are wards of the state."

But the Indians also seem to have marginalized and folklorized themselves here, mainly it seems to satisfy their supporters who want to feed their own fierce primitive images. Maurice Strong, the oilman who heads UNCED, came out to smoke a peace pipe and get his picture in the paper with the Indians.

We heard the Yanomami took one look at Kari Oca and said no thanks. The so-called last stone-age people in the world preferred to stay in a hotel



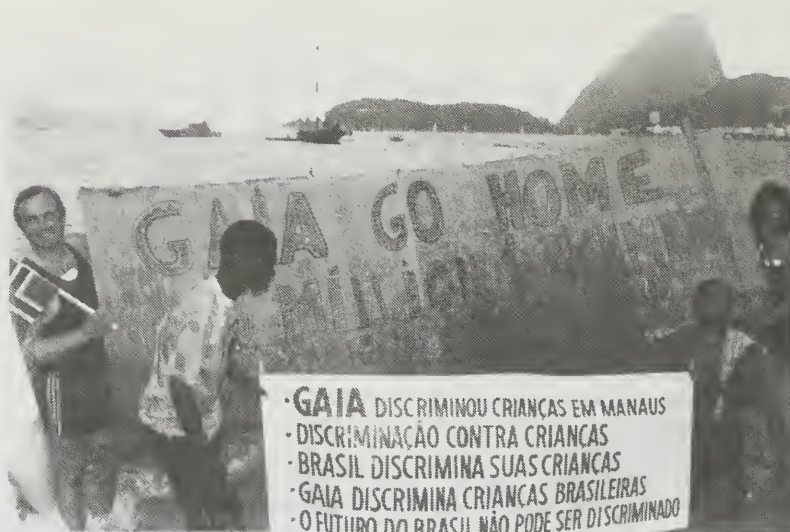
play them out.

Our first view of this was the stockade fenced replica of an Indian village they call Kari Oca, a play on *carioca*, the nickname for the urbane residents of Rio, and *oca*, an Indian word for lodge or hut. The Indians are on display at Kari Oca. They have built great thatched lodges where they meet and rest in hammocks during the heat of the day. But later there is plenty of feathers and folklore for photographers with frequent dances and war party whoops. A blonde woman dressed like Jane parades with her Tarzan-like Indian sidekick, a painted exotic dancer who has toured Europe and America, who hands us his business card. When it comes time to eat, the reputedly fierce Kayapo are always first in line.

downtown.

Tonight we were invited out with our informants among the upper class cariocas. They took us to a chic new restaurant, *Mistura Fina*, the first stop on a rarefied view of Rio. The rich are nervous these days. Not only has the *Presidente* been denounced as a corrupt, drug-sniffing megalomaniac by his own brother, shaming all who voted for him, but the Little Prince has been kidnapped from Petropolis. The heir to the Brazilian monarchy, if there still were one, is being held for \$5 million ransom. The country can't pay. (Brazil is scheduled to hold a national referendum in 1993 on what type of state they will have: presidential, parliamentary, or monarchy!)

"This is Brazil," said the daughter of a



Rio newspaper magnate, "Just today, I was robbed of my purse at gunpoint while stopped at a red light."

Yet when one of us innocently agreed that you have to stay on your toes in Rio, she protested vehemently.

"Everywhere is violent! The same thing could happen in St. Moritz or Monaco! My poor country," she sighed, as if the burden of the image was even greater than that of reality.

We ended up at a party thrown by the youngest member of the Brazilian parliament. We looked down on the swimming pool of the Copacabana Palace and debated how much smoked salmon to eat, as champagne was poured down our gullets by waiters in black and white. We had hoped that the bowls circulating through the crowd might contain some of Rio's famous *Brizola*, the state governor's name which has become slang for cocaine. We were about to dip in when the Special Agent reminded us just in time about the sturgeon general's warning about inhaling caviar. It doesn't matter. We're starting to ride a current of energy that seems like the pulse of this city.

Saturday, May 30: We woke up late to find that the Army has occupied Rio with 6,000 soldiers posted every 100 meters along the beachfront avenues. And today we had to carry more money and jugs of hallucinogens to the Indians. The Special Agent's mission is getting out of line. We crammed into a borrowed car with a few friends we have picked up along the way and drove out to Kari Oca. The car smelled of alcohol fuel—even the machines run on cane liquor—and backfired every block. We

were afraid we would be shot at.

It turned out the orange liquid in the jugs was *ayahuasca* bound for the Sami, the blonde, blue-eyed indigenes from Norway who were dressed in red and blue wool outfits and sweating profusely when we arrived. Last night, they said, some of the Indians had hopped around clucking like chickens. They wanted to try some of whatever that was.

I was about to do the same when the Special Agent pulled me aside and showed me the little pieces of paper printed with lightning bolts that a friend had slipped to him in trade. "Berserker medicine," he said, "for the beer and wool tribe." We decided to get out of town and leave the indigenous people to their own hallucinations.

We headed south along the coast past the Club Med to a hotel on a bluff with a chairlift descending to the beach below. Prevailing on a waiter to keep the bar open, we sipped *caipirinhas* and stared up at the stars. We couldn't find the Southern Cross. We're becoming disoriented. Or maybe we never had our bearings.

Monday, June 1: Dawn over Copacabana. We're barely holding on at our favorite juice bar on Nossa Senhora de Copacabana as Rio starts a new week-day. The Blade Runner turns from his orange juice, nods adeus, and disappears into the cacophony.

We spent the morning yesterday sitting by the pool like experts analyzing the Earth Summit, which begins today.

"The name itself always struck me as a little pretentious," said the Blade Runner. Could you really expect 128 heads of state to solve the Earth's

problems during a weekend in Rio?

Caught with thousands of other cars in a tunnel on the way back into town, we started making up headlines for the big event. **Traffic Jam at the Earth Summit. Green Gathering Produces Global Gridlock and Greenhouse Gases. UNCED: Better Left Unsaid.**

We turned off at Ipanema Beach and decided to escape even further with those lightning bolts. Then we headed for the Universidade do Chope, the university of draft beer, and the Academia de Cachaça, the academy of cane liquor, to get in shape.

We left our car in the care of the Guardian of the Universe until we were primed to race with the rest of Rio. We roared down the beachfront like Emerson Fittipaldi, belching alcohol out our tailpipe. We dined late with the Queens of Copacabana in a little trattoria by the beach. We closed down Caligula and went vainly in search of a late night Bossa. We followed a tip about a Dada 'n' Zen bar to a curtained door in an anonymous office building. Inside they were showing urban pastoral animation on the wall, cities turning into butterflies, and mixing passion fruit *caipirinhas*. We ended up back at the apartment, trying to stay out of trouble, listening loud to world music and dream-like pop that sounded like the last wave played backwards until the dawn rose over Copacabana.

Tuesday, June 2: We've been shopping for a better world. The future of ecology is on sale at the Global Forum, a huge flea market of eco-gear and ideology. Outside Flamengo Park, street vendors hawk everything from nylon bags to beach towels emblazoned with Eco 92 and pictures of parrots and scantily clad women. Inside environmental organizations sell everything from t-shirts and books to crystals and rainforest powders.

Dubbed an Eco-Woodstock by the local press, the diversity reflects the inclusivity and relativity of ecology. Not only are the predictable environmentalists and developmentalists here, from Greenpeace to the Global Environmental Fund, but scientists, technocrats, businessmen, and spiritualists are in on the action too. It is a view of the new ecological global village where everything is seen through green lenses. Here everything seems open to debate in ecological terms.

"Still there's more talk about preservation than about cities," complained Silvia Barbosa Muniz, a social worker

who like us was touring the more than 600 booths. "The worst degradation is in big cities," she said, seeming to sum up Rio's message to the Earth Summit. "And it has to do with misery. How can we improve the environment unless we make human relations better? The world can't equilibrate until there's more of a human equilibrium. Our problems are not separated. People can't be. Nature has us intimately tied."

I wanted to get together with her on that. But the Bodyguard pulled me away just in time. Who is he watching out for anyway? I'm beginning to think it's my wife.

Wandering around, we came across a blue-and-white tent where the Worldwatch Institute was holding an opening day press conference. The blue-blazer-khaki-slacks-loafer-and-open-shirt crowd seemed to be assembling for a news feed. It looked like a gathering of the new ecocrats of the global village, presumably the future rulers of the world. We couldn't miss out!

"This is a turning point in history," proclaimed Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Norwegian prime minister and chair of the commission that led to UNCED. Worldwatch head Lester Brown claimed no less modestly, "This is an event that will separate two distinct eras. What the future will be like will be decided here."

The Worldwatch cadre appears to be an especially assertive crossbreed of environmental doomsayers and eco-policy wonks eager to sit in the driver's seat and save the world—or at least make the obligatory warnings from the back seat. "We must reverse direction in the next decade," said Brown. "Or we will face a spiral of economic and environmental decline. And future generations will have no chance. Whether this conference leads to the social momentum to bring about the necessary transformations will be the measure of its success," Brown allowed.

The dream of conference-goers and think-tankers like these is that by parlaying with the media and policymakers they will be able to build social momentum for change. Nobody talks about movements anymore. The latest line in social engineering is that ecological principles should organize the economy.

"To reconcile human activities with the laws of nature, nothing less is what must be done," said Brundtland. But what are the laws of nature? And do we really want our social life organized according to the science of ecology, which aside from some very large gen-

eral theories and some very small specific findings is still mainly a rhetoric easily appropriated by many ideologies?

It sounded like survival of the fittest to me. And there is no doubt that eco-pundits will survive. While the authorities talked, beer, orange juice, mineral water, and *guarana* (the Coke of Brazil) were free-flowing. A buffet table was laden with platters of roast beef, quiche, pate, eggplant, fresh salad, papaya, *guanabana*, kiwi, pineapple, and strawberries.

Meanwhile Lester Brown was saying, "Chateaubriand said forests come before civilization, deserts after. The equation is simple: the more people, the more

poverty, the more pollution." I was getting confused. Did he say something about steak? I was reminded of Maurice Strong's wish for us all to live lives of elegant simplicity. Would we all be able to have our Chateaubriand and eat our desserts too?

We ducked out after lunch and went to catch the opening ceremony of the Global Forum. On the beach, we met up with a friend from the World Bank, which also has a small stand here, too. "This is great. It's wonderful," he enthused. "All these little groups getting together."

But didn't he feel awkward or threatened, walking around with a World

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graphic by Totally Normal

Many hands makes
less workers

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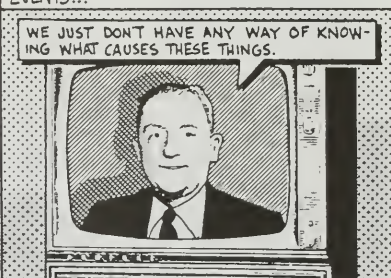
Bio-engineering for business

THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

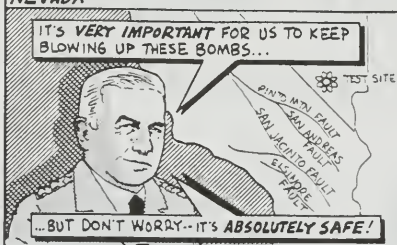
LAST MONTH, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WAS ROCKED BY TWO POWERFUL EARTHQUAKES...



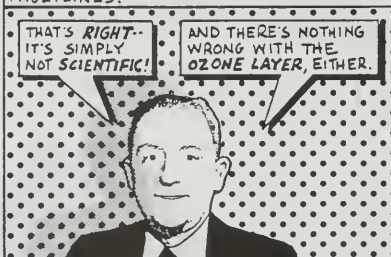
FOR A FEW DAYS AFTERWARD, THE AIRWAVES WERE FILLED WITH SCIENTISTS DISCUSSING THE COMPLETE UNPREDICTABILITY OF SUCH EVENTS...



NO ONE MENTIONED THE FACT THAT A WEEK PRIOR TO THE QUAKE, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT (EVIDENTLY UNAWARE THAT THE COLD WAR HAS ENDED) EXPLODED TWO 20-KILOTON NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNDERGROUND IN NEIGHBORING NEVADA--



--BECAUSE, OF COURSE, HOW COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS AND SUBSEQUENT EARTHQUAKE ACTIVITY ON NEARBY FAULTLINES?



graphic by Tom Tomorrow

THE MODERN WORLD BY TOM TOMORROW

Bank name tag on his chest? "I haven't been attacked yet," he replied cheerfully. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "Sounds like processed cheese," he laughed, when I told him of our assignment.

A helicopter circled overhead as we waited in a huge crowd for the arrival of *Gaia*, a replica Viking boat carrying messages from the children of the world. But *Gaia* seemed to be stuck offshore. Brazilian girl scouts were whining through an unintelligible song about the Earth when the crowd started getting unruly. A mob of journalists rushed the celebrities on stage. I pushed my way through the commotion.

A couple of ruddy hippies were standing in the waves with a big banner strung between them. "*GAIA GO HOME! 5 MILLION \$ RICH MEN SHOW OFF. Give the Money to the Favelas (& solve ecological problems there),*" the banner read, with each phrase diminishing across its length. "I am Bruntland's green warrior," shouted one of the protestors from the Society of Nature Conservists of Norway. Soon a group of street kids jumped in on the action with a banner reading "*The children of Brazil are abandoned.*"

We decided it was time to clear out. Heading for the exits, we ran into an angry young American smashing a coconut

on the sidewalk to get at the white meat inside. The Special Agent offered his Swiss Army knife. "What are you doing here?" we asked.

"I came to participate in the process," he glowered. "But business and government are up there screwing each other and we're here wallowing in the muck. This is the biggest farce, totally paid for by Coke, 3M, and Arco," he averred, waving the coconut at the stands and tents all around the Global Forum. "They've got the right to put their label on this thing," he said. "It's gone a step beyond greenwashing, you know. They're not just putting a facade on it. They're owning it."

Wednesday, June 3: A day of official events began in darkness at the Earth Parliament. Somebody was blowing a panpipe while a monotone voice droned something about his mother earth and another body danced in the shadows. This was the show Darrell Posey organized to demonstrate the wisdoms of tribal people.

Posey has been credited with pointing out in recent years that indigenous knowledge is just as valid as western science. But this show seems designed to blur the idea into an insipid blend of new age spirit pap.

The Earth Parliament is sponsored by The Body Shop. Posey is pushing a new line of androgynous perfumes made from jungle ingredients and named for Indian tribes. Now you, too, can smell like indigenous people!

When we asked where this latest rainforest marketing idea came from, Posey replied, "Well, I'm an anthropologist and a botanist." But before he could continue, the Special Agent said, "Well, I'm a man and a gardener. So what?" I had to pull him out of there before they got into a fight.

Over at the National Museum, where the intellectuals were meeting, we picked up some hard numbers. From a linguist we learned that only half of the world's 6,000 languages are currently being taught. Only 300 languages are sure of being in use a century from now. While everybody is bemoaning biodiversity loss, he said, there is little being heard in favor of cultural diversity.

Back at the Global Forum's International Press Center, we decided to play journalists and spend the rest of the day at press conferences. "The greatest enemy of the environment is poverty," said an economist of the World Bank, reflecting the new universal line. "Environmental damages are not inevitable. Governments have it within their hands to turn these unwanted results around. We believe in a win-win policy."

"There will be problems," acknowledged another official. "But if we make errors we will remedy them."

"The World Bank is greener than the trees," the Special Agent whispered. So is big business these days. The Business Council for Sustainable Development has come to Rio to announce its strategy for internalizing environmental costs. Of course they didn't mention passing on the costs to consumers. Greenpeace counterattacked with a slick press kit of its own denouncing the greenwashing of big bad business.

The Indians too, held a press conference. "Yanomami is people too, *gente, povo,*" announced Davi Yanomami. "Yanomami knows how to talk, to think. I'm talking here without a paper. I'm talking from my own knowledge. You can't find my path."

He had a warning for Bush. "Don't come to town with a bad heart."

"If the market is the new religion," said the Special Agent, "then I'll stick to my animist guns."

Next we learned that the Global Forum is bankrupt. Since we arrived, there have been noises that the event is

\$2 million short. Now they're threatening to pass one of Bella Abzug's hats around. We decide to apply the law of supply and demand and make ourselves scarce.

Friday, June 5: We ran around town all day looking for the ballyhooed biodiversity treaty. None of the environmental groups in their public relations trailers at the International Press Center had a copy of the treaty they were excoriating the U.S. for refusing to sign. So we took our first trip out to the official UNCED conference for the signing.

The road to Riocentro, a new convention center built especially for the Earth Summit, shows the whole story here. The route goes by the famous beaches and high-rises, past the infamous Rocinha *favela* [slum]. Army tanks are poised with turrets trained on the hillside shantytown said to be controlled by druglords. Although Rio has been spruced up *para Ingles ver* (for the English to see), the ragged edges are always apparent.

Riocentro is a big warehouse-like structure built on marshes south of the city. A *favela* has already sprung up across the street and tapped into the water and electricity lines going to the convention center. These neighbors have complained that sewage from the official delegates is discharged into their front yards.

When I asked at the U.S. delegation for a copy of the biodiversity treaty President Bush has refused to sign, a delegate intoned, "that would not be appropriate," but finally, a diplomat at

the Brazilian delegation was persuaded to make us a copy.

More than any other document at the summit, the treaty on biological diversity reflects the thicket of controversies confronting any attempt to equitably administer global ecology. And the biodiversity treaty has become an instant rhetorical battleground between North and South, the presumed poles of the New World Order. "By making Third World countries buy clean technology from the First World," a Third World journalist explained to us later that night, "the First World maintains its domination in the name of ecology."

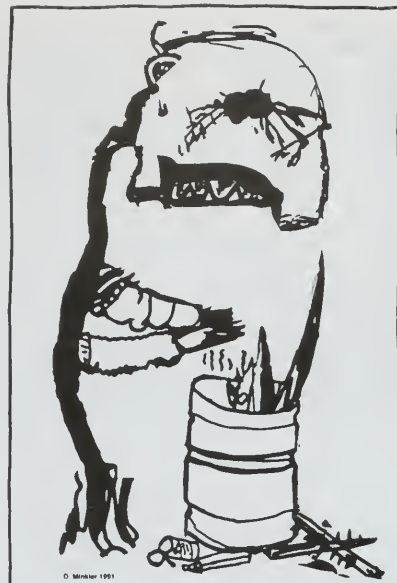
Oh, now we get it, we nodded.

The biodiversity treaty attempts to make the First World countries share technology, patents, and profits with Third World countries. Nevermind that it's hard to tell who's on first and who's on third, not to mention what north and south have to do with it. Late into the night, we get into arguments defending the refusal to sign such a mess, on the grounds that perhaps mutual respect of property rights, as the Indians insisted at their meeting, is a better place to start.

But everybody is getting burned out on arguments already. They want things to move.

"I was waiting for this moment," said a young Brazilian reporter at the Rock and Roll Bar. "How do you feel now?" we asked. "Empty," she sighed.

Monday, June 8: At the Earth Walk protest on Copacabana beach yesterday, the Americans took the front row with their trenchant critique of George Bush:



graphic by Doug Minkler

CAPITALISM
with a human face.

"eco-wimp," they taunted. It's beginning to grate on us that Americans are always so insistent on taking the lead, even if they have nothing to lead with. So what did they expect? And why can't they just shut up and follow the rest of the world for a while?

Later at the Circo Voador, at a performance club called the Flying Circus, the Earth Parliament held its closing ceremony. After Indian leaders made long speeches, the press exploded with elbows and glee when the U.S. Congressional delegation entered for a powwow.

Congressman Porter, of the House Human Rights Subcommittee, told the Blade Runner that he became aware there were human rights violations in the world when his wife was strip searched at the Moscow airport. The delegation had its picture taken with the Kayapo, naturally, whose macaw feather headdresses make them the most photogenic. Al Gore had his own film crew documenting this culmination of his transformation from Mr. Military Appropriations into an environmental visionary. It was a vision we found hard to believe.

We had to get away. At dusk, we crossed the bridge to Niteroi, the Oakland of Guanabara Bay. In a small garden house, we joined a gathering of Indians and rubber tappers who were passing around whiskey bottles filled with that bright orange acrid liquid—the vision vine of the forest—*ayahuasca*.



A Kaxinawa shaman calls the spirits to the ceremony. As he chants softly, dogs at the far end of the town begin to bark, the sound coming closer. Soon every dog in town is yapping. Suddenly, a giant anaconda appears across a night sky of neon colors. Later a rubber tapper sings a soothing vision into our brains of an orange tree loaded with beautiful orange fruit shaking in the breeze. Then he sings of his niece, she's a daughter of the stream, pretty Janaina, still a little girl, nearly a woman.

Then the Santo Daime people, urban adherents of the jungle juice, begin their ethereal ballads. In minor keys, they sing us into quiet green groves, to see the light and secrets of the imaginary forest. We go deeper and deeper into a night lit like day. As dawn comes, we talk of the visions we shared over a quick coffee and then head back into the maelstrom strangely revived.

Tuesday, June 9: As the days go by there are more people in our apartment. We wake up beside strangers and scrounge through the fresh fruit for breakfast. We're sleeping less and less. We stay up late and get up early. But it doesn't matter. CNN's camera commandoes are here, therefore the whole world is here, therefore this is, at least for now, the center of the world, therefore there is no time to sleep. And the less we sleep, the more this becomes obvious.

Today, a busload of 50 Brazilian Indians drove, with military helicopter escort, to Riocentro to deliver a statement to the official U.N. delegations. Raoni, the Kayapo chief and friend of

Sting, rode shotgun. His wooden lip disk and bottle-glass prescription glasses gave him the curious look of a modern primitive. But the Indians remained on the bus, while anthropologists and activists answered questions about them from the press. Just like in the good old days.

Later back at the Global Forum, we run into chief Mario Juruna, an Indian elected to Congress to represent Rio during the waning days of the military dictatorship. He was arguing with officials of the government's environmental protection agency who were insisting that he take down a jaguar-hide hung by one of his tribesman on the side of a tree hopefully to sell to a tourist.

"What are you so concerned about?" Juruna protested.

"This skin will turn to dust. It is nothing. Meanwhile you whites are killing all the trees, all the animals, all the fish. You are also killing Indians. Yet you worry about this skin, which is already dead."

The nongovernmental organizations here have started acting like governments. They're meeting late into the night, composing their own alternative treaties on forests, biodiversity, and cooperative agreement. No doubt they will fare at least as well as the official treaties. Not that is.

The official organizers of this thing have set up a people's newspaper called *Da Zi Bao*. We're starting to compose messages for it like "I M N NGO, U R N NGO," "The market is the future of

Hey, come back ! I have sole rights to Historical Truth !!



LENIN MISSES THE BUS OF HISTORY (but calls a taxidermist later)

ecology and ecology is the future of the market."

On our way home, we stopped by the juice bar.

"Here there's no ecology," the owner told us. "It's all artificial. This city, the capital of ecology, is all screwed up. For foreigners they make it easy. But for patriots not. It's a big bureaucracy."

"Ecology, what does ecology mean?" asked his friend who owned a bookstore. "We'll still work 12 hours a day."

"Brazil is a rich country," the juice man said. "But the administration is the worst."

"We need a dictator," the men agreed. "A Fujimori. A Perot!" they laughed.

Friday, June 12: We have begun to hear ominous stories of reality returning to Rio. A story is going around about two policemen who dropped a bag of grass in an American environmentalist's lap. One of the cops pointed a gun at the criminal's head and ordered his friends to hurry to their hotel and bring back \$1,000 if they wanted to see him alive. The terrified environmentalists hastily complied.

To make Rio safe for ecologists, police reportedly have rounded up street kids for the duration of the Earth Summit. Everybody wonders what happened to them. Even so, each night we step over the bodies of sleeping people on our way here and there.

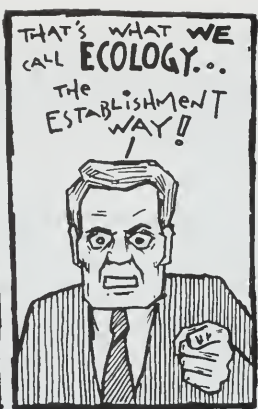
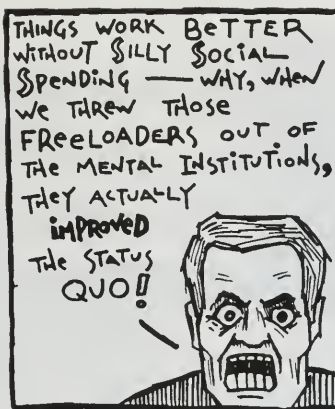
The facade of order seems to be crumbling before the big event is even over. Today, after witnessing the third car accident in the morning, we decided



it's time to bail out. The driver of the first car was bumped by a truck. He took a tire iron to the truck's windshield, then sped away. Meanwhile, our cab ran into a bus.

We're beginning to think too much like Rio taxi drivers ourselves, making left hand turns from the right lane and vice versa. We're starting to take ourselves too seriously, believing our own monikers, and acting like rhetorical gunmen shooting down absurdities. We got into a verbal duel with a man from RAN, the Rainforest Action Network, over dinner tonight. We were cruel. We made him admit that he had never been to a rainforest. Then we revealed that Rio is in the midst of a rainforest.

The Blade Runner came back from the bathroom announcing that some guy had asked him to take some space age navigation devices to the rubber-tappers. The hand-held receivers instantly calculate a position on earth via satellites orbiting above. The guy said they were used in the Gulf War to pinpoint bombing targets and maybe



graphic by Hugh D'Audrade

the rubbertappers could use them to locate their territories in space. The Blade Runner said he would have to check with them next time they met on the *astral*. "Guns and Roses!" our cabbie yells at the top of his lungs as he squeals through a red light into the night.

Monday, June 15: Some things have to be believed to be seen. An Inuit wise man said that on the cover of the Earth Parliament brochure. It could have been

the motto of the Earth Summit.

The Worldwatchers say they can see the future. "We can actually see what an ecologically sustainable global economy will look like," said Lester Brown. "And we could build it now with available technologies. But time is running out."

You've got to believe it to see it. As the millenium approaches, people seem to be obsessed with deadlines for the end of the world. Not us. At Eco 92, we felt

Nine Guides to Saving the Planet (Not!)

Reviewed by Jon Christensen

Pity the poor soul who embarks here. You could spend the rest of your life reading about saving the planet. I only wasted a summer.

In these books, the reader floats uneasily in the ocean of facts that make up our ever more crowded world, with its temperature rising, its ozone layer balding, its biological and cultural diversity vanishing. Remarkably, for such a complicated and controversial subject as the future of the world, these books share many of the same views, with a couple of notable exceptions. Maybe that's why we need a sea change in environmental consciousness.

The school of global ecological management rules. What it is.

1. OUR COMMON FUTURE. *The World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1987.*

This was the document that enshrined the notion of sustainable development and set the tack for the Earth Summit. It reflects the positivist perspective of believers in the United Nations. Chaired by the vice-president of the Socialist International, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the commission reports that poverty is the principal cause of environmental degradation. Equity is the answer to the tragedy of the commons. But we must face the limits to growth. It is all there, the entire basic argument for worldwide solutions to the crisis of the environment and human misery. Comprised of blue-ribbon representatives from 28 countries, the commission eschews confrontation. It is not that there is one set of villains and another of victims, they say. While giving good lip service to public participation, the

model promoted here is global governance. The Commission enshrines Public Hearings as its trademark. But one gets the worrying feeling that all of this might be a mere sideshow to the real consolidation of power under green regimes, not unlike the relationship of the Global Forum's eco-bazaar to the Earth Summit in Rio 92.

2. THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP: A Guide to Agenda 21. *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. United Nations Publications: New York, 1992.*

UNCED's megaglobalmaniac agenda for the 21st century was to be signed by world leaders at the Earth Summit. This guide to Agenda 21 boils the lofty goals down to seven priority areas: Revitalizing Growth with Sustainability (The Prospering World!), Sustainable Living (The Just World!), Human Settlements (The Habitable World!), Efficient Resource Use (The Fertile World!), Global and Regional Resources (The Shared World!), Managing Chemicals and Waste (The Clean World!), and People Participation and Responsibility (The People's World!). It sounds like an overly stimulated cross between the Comintern and Exxon. No doubt there are some good ideas here. But when it came down to negotiating the actual 800-plus-page agenda, all the controversial parts were simply bracketed. Finally, the document was adopted by acclamation [sans controversial sections and any budget commitments]. Hailed as a blueprint for the planet, the vacuously wordy result goes to show that the future is not likely to be decided by consensus. What is interesting about this huge undertaking is what has been taken out since Our Common Future. Sections on population and the military were essentially

guttured. The ongoing adaptation of Agenda 21 to political exigencies was captured on-line by Econet. Also available are the Rio Declaration (a short homily to U.N. clichés), Forest Principles, Treaty on Biological Diversity, and the Convention on Global Climate Change.

3. BEYOND THE LIMITS: Confronting the Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future. *Donella Meadows et al. Chelsea Green: Post Mills, Vermont, 1992*

Twenty years ago, in *The Limits to Growth*, the authors predicted that we only had 20 years to change our ways. Now the sequel to the international bestseller proclaims that we only have 20 years to change our ways. Would it be safe to predict that 20 years from now the dire predictions will continue? Or will millennial fever die down when the planet soars past the year 2000? It seems unlikely. We've already overshot our limits, warn Meadows and company. And don't say we didn't warn you. This is the basic premise behind the whole worldwide debate for which the Earth Summit was supposed to be the apotheosis. The word comes from a computer program called World3. In computers, we trust. Tellingly for the times, however, the number crunchers conclude that saving the world will require changes in consciousness and spirituality. This is the mantra of the New Age Order, which seems destined to be ruled by ecotechnocrats using the rhetoric of religion.

4. ONLY ONE WORLD: Our Own to Make and to Keep. *Gerard Piel. W.H. Freeman: New York, 1992.*

The author was the founder of *Scientific American*. His earnest balancing act strives for the middle of the road, carefully weighing historical evidence, tendencies to environmental hysteria, and the apparent limits to management. But in the final

we could live forever and never have to sleep. But our bodies said fuck you. After the Earth Summit comes the global hangover.

While the new ecocrats ride the green wave we all hope will never break, post-Earth Summit ecology seems to have become not a new way of thinking that will save us all but a somehow familiar terrain for old struggles. The security forces took a day at the beach today. The street kids were back on the streets. And it seemed the Earth Summit would quickly fade into that category of megaspectacles and events populated by Earth Days past, Live Aid, and Hands Across Whatever.

As Eco 92 broke over Rio, we wondered whether ecology might be spent. These ecologists were. The Bodyguard rounded us all into a cab to the airport and what seemed like the last light out.

The Special Agent woke from a nightmare haze somewhere over the Amazon. He had dreamed of global elephants, stomping through the jungle



like they owned it, yet mortally terrified of the local mice they were squashing underfoot. Hyenas yapped from the sidelines and vultures craned their necks at the scene from their perches in the

trees. This was the vision that he took from the Earth Summit. He knew which side he was on.

—Jon Christensen, with Jeremy Narby and Glen Switkes

analysis, Piel demonstrates how the scientific establishment has been the driving force behind the effort to enshrine ecological management as the *ne plus ultra* of global governance in the future. Naturally, since scientific technocrats have much to gain in that revolution, if we may be so bold as to call it that. Piel eschews the spiritual dimension in favor of hard facts. And he is more optimistic than many of the others. He puts his faith in economic growth and human development so he fears not a doubling of world population, projected for the end of the 21st century. But then we will have reached the limits, he asserts. We have not much more than a century to find our way to the steady-state, Piel warns. Listen good now.

5. SAVING THE PLANET: How to Shape an Environmentally Sustainable Global Economy. Lester Brown et al. W.W. Norton: New York, 1991.

Today's politically correct policy wonk hews to the Worldwatch line. The Institute seems perfectly positioned for the next think-tank wave inside the Washington beltway. *Après l'American Enterprise Institute, nous.* Worldwatchers were the darlings of the Earth Summit circuit (and they had the best lunch for the press). It all seems so simple when they speak. For the most part plain spoken and relatively jargon free, Worldwatch is widely read and quoted. We can see the future, they say. Best believe. Place your bets. As advertisers are fond of saying, they say, this is a limited time offer. It will soon expire.

6. TOP GUNS AND TOXIC WHALES: The Environment and Global Security. Gwyn Prins and Robbie Stamp. Earthscan: London, 1991.

Another popular line for the most up-to-date pundits sounds more than a little like ecology for Rambo. If the environment is a security issue, why

not let the security forces handle it? Gung-ho military men can now embrace their new mission: saving the earth. That way we can save the military too. The peace dividend should be invested in the environmental-security agenda, the authors argue. Prins, a security don at Cambridge, imagines a Green War Room, monitoring environmental crises worldwide. A computer program called CASSANDRA tracks these security threats. And a Green Police Force under the United Nations is deployed to enforce rules. This book was designed as a companion to a TV show by Ted Turner's Better World Society. And it reads like a TV show, with lots of pictures, graphs, computer screens and boxes.

7. EARTH IN THE BALANCE: Ecology and the Human Spirit. Senator Al Gore. Houghton Mifflin: New York, 1992.

Here, the wanna-be environmental vice-president lays out his vision for the new age in excruciatingly earnest prose. Talk about family values. Gore analyzes the world as a dysfunctional family that must heal itself to save itself. He seems an apt personification of this moment in ecology. He seems to have fashioned his line in an encounter group of the world's trendiest environmentalists. He rubs elbows with Ted and Jane, Shirley and the Dalai. This globe-trotting parliamentarian's bottom line is personal change. And his Global Marshall Plan for saving the environment is a market basket of hip proposals including carbon taxes, virgin materials fees, full life-cycle costs, efficiency standards throughout the economy. Look at how Mr. Military Appropriations has transformed himself into the Green Candidate!

8. CHANGING COURSE: A Global Business Perspective on Development and Environment. Stephan Schmidheiny with the Business Council for

Sustainable Development. MIT Press: Cambridge, 1992.

This is the new face of green capitalism. While the stereotype continues to be of industries keeping costs low, the smart money bets on passing on costs and garnering profits from environmental regulation. The themes of this new business environment: the polluter pays, open markets are crucial for sustainable development, environmental costs are internalized and reflected in prices and within the evaluations of capital markets. The report analyzes how these changes can be managed, and what the implications are for production, investment and trade. The BCSD calls for broadening and deepening the relationships between buyers and sellers and long-term partnerships to boost both economic development and environmental standards in the developing world. So this is s'posed to be the new world?

9. ENVIRONMENT AND DEMOCRACY. Organized by Henri Acelrad. IBASE: Rio de Janeiro, 1992.

This collection of essays by the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses—the country's preeminent NGO—was produced to reflect the Third World, and more specifically Brazilian, perspective on the Earth Summit. It is an excellent example of the adaptation of the left-wing, anti-imperialist, popular movement line to the changing times. In an era when the rhetoric of ecology reigns supreme, this book and the Brazilian experience show that socialists are not going to be left out. The right is not wrong in pointing out how quickly red has turned green. Shifting rhetoric and jargon included in these essays provide a trenchant Third World take on current environmental debates about poverty and development, energy and timber, Indians and the Amazon, GATT and free markets, global governance and the grass roots.

OWNING IDEAS: A Debate

TREATY FAVORS TNCs

Despite being cast as the lone villain in a global village, the United States had a surprising ally in opposing the controversial biodiversity treaty at the Earth Summit. Indigenous people from the tropical forests of the world took a similar position against the treaty in a meeting just before the official summit.

Like the United States, the Indians want a guarantee of respect for "intellectual property rights" or patents. This convergence highlights a fatal flaw in the convention on biological diversity.

The treaty will be signed by governments seeking control of burgeoning markets and profits in biotechnology. But it will bypass the only players who really count in the production and marketing process—indigenous people who know how to tap the great diversity of the tropical forests, and industries that can bring forest products to market.

Treaty advocates in Rio cited what they call a clear-cut case of "bioimperialism." The multinational pharmaceutical giant, Merck & Co., manufactures a treatment for glaucoma based on an alkaloid extracted from jaborandi, a bush found exclusively in the Amazon. Kayapo and Guajajara Indians, who first used the plant as a medicine, now harvest and sell the leaves to Merck under conditions some anthropologists describe as "near slavery." In Germany, the alkaloid is refined and made into eyedrops that Brazil, among other countries, imports.

The most effective way to undercut this bioimperialism would be to make sure that those who first brought the jaborandi to the attention of international chemists—the Indians—receive patents and royalties. Instead, the biodiversity treaty compels the industrialized nations to compensate Brazil and other governments of developing nations where the raw materials are found.

Advocates portray the treaty controversy as another round in the battle between North and South. The North seeks to protect biological patents and profits while insisting that the South preserve its tropical forests. And the South protests attempts to lock up its genetic resources in patents and preserves while insisting that the North share the wealth generated from these raw materials.

Ironically, what this debate ignores is the new common ground that has emerged between the "North of the North"—the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries of the developed world—and the "South of the South"—the indigenous people of the tropical forests.

Roughly three-quarters of the compounds in the modern global pharmacopoeia originally derived from plants "discovered" through research on the use of plants by indigenous people. The value of such genetic resources is predicted to reach \$50 billion by the year 2000. Yet it is estimated that only 2% of the plants in the Amazon alone have been studied by scientists. The indigenous people of the tropical forests hold the keys to much of the rest.

Ethno-botanists and pharmacologists have only begun to tap the complex data base of indigenous empirical knowledge. When their knowledge is used

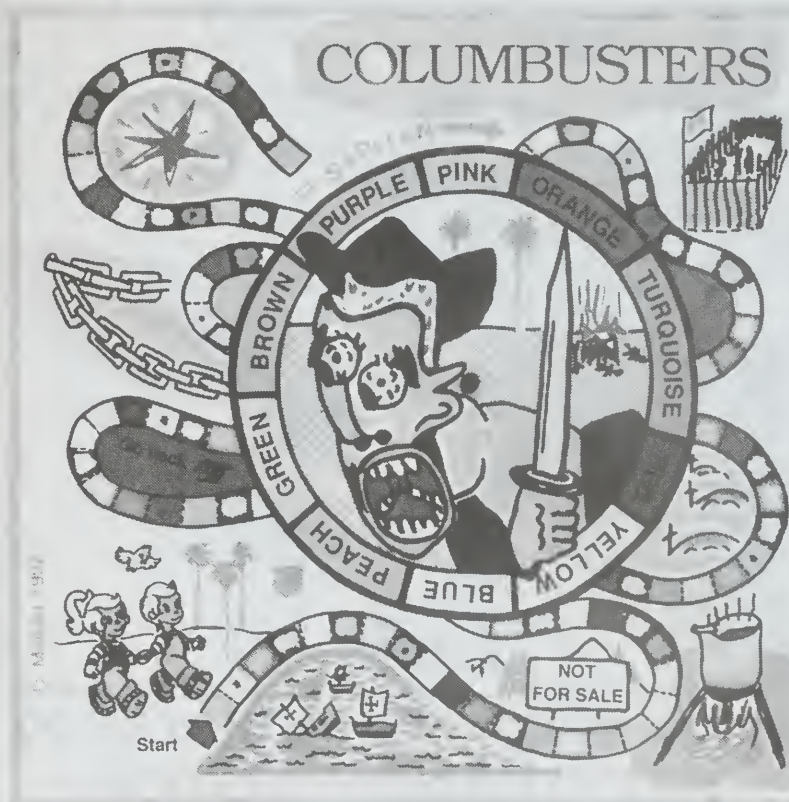
for profit, indigenous people say they should have just as much right to a patent for "intellectual property rights"—knowledge of how to use or process a plant—as the pharmaceutical companies now enjoy.

To be successful, a treaty on biodiversity would have to include not only the governments of the North and the South, but also indigenous people and companies that use their biological resources and knowledge. By giving all the power over biodiversity to governments—many of which, like Brazil, have a dismal track record of honoring either patents or indigenous property rights—the biodiversity treaty is set up to fail.

U.S. objections to the treaty cover only half of the equation—the "intellectual property rights" of biotechnology companies. The other half involves recognizing indigenous people's demand to those same rights.

Respecting the patent rights of both would provide a financial incentive for conserving and developing biodiversity at the ground level in the South. And royalties on patents would provide the return flow of hard cash from the North to the South that new markets for genetic wealth will generate.

Many delegates protested that it is too late to amend the biodiversity treaty. But a fundamentally flawed treaty should not have been signed in a rush



COLUMBUSTERS

RULES: Spin Columbus, move to designated color

- Give back all native land
- Lose all slaves
- Receive molten gold throat treatment to relieve treasure lust
- Busted for incompetence Go back to Spain

Cholera infected blankets meant for native people kills all your soldiers.

Alcohol meant to stupefy native peoples intoxicates crew, your ship sinks.

Forced on white reservation for own good.

GOAL: Try to get from 1492 to 1992 keeping the mythical vision of brave Columbus the discoverer locked in your mind. The winner receives an American flag, and a Support the Troops bumper sticker

to save the appearance that something was being accomplished at the Earth Summit. Mutual recognition of property rights would do more concrete good than all the high-minded rhetoric about preservation and equity in the current biodiversity treaty.

—Jon Christensen

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RITES

There has recently been a flurry of discussion around Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs, in the jargon of the day). At the recent Earth Summit the United States refused to sign a treaty on biodiversity

because of proposed restrictions on patents of pharmaceuticals derived from plants. Curiously, however, the advocates (e.g. the anthropologists of Cultural Survival) are not limited to the profit-hungry corporations; there are those who see IPRs as a possible tool in giving indigenous people more control over the use of traditional lands.

It is not an auspicious time for the idea of intellectual property. Computer programs and data which can be copied and distributed electronically; the ubiquitous copy machines and faxes; audio and video (re-)recording devices; and countries which are

not members of various treaty conventions on copyrights and the like (India, China, etc.); and the use of "sampling" in music and "reverse-engineering" in manufacturing have made a mockery of the extension of property relations into the realm of intellectual creation.

Even within the United States there is much conflicting law and practice. The original concept of copyrights has its origin in the idea that ideas must not remain the exclusive property of the "inventor," for, as Jefferson wrote, "one may take another's idea without leaving the first poorer" (his analogy of one candle lighting another comes to mind). Such "ownership" was limited to the author's life plus a fixed number of years; patent law explicitly requires the public statement of the invention and (often) the best way of producing the object, and allows the inventor a limited period of control. Some of the basic concepts of patents included denying patents for natural products, for inventions which were obvious or commonplace, and for other people's creations.

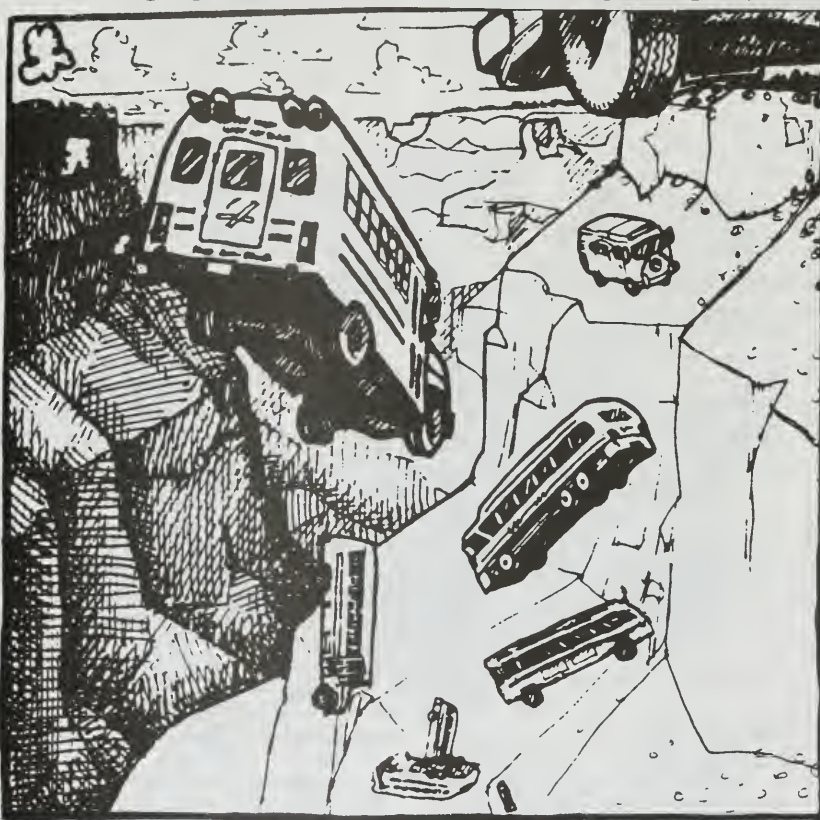
Recently, however, there has been a burgeoning of US patents and copyrights on more subtle concepts: processes and methods, as well as naturally occurring chemicals and substances. People (usually corporations, or their proxies) have recently been awarded patents on algorithms (which previously have been regarded as "discovered" rather than invented), and on "new" biological organisms and species (which are, in fact, only new combinations of previously existing genetic material). The relentless drive for profit and control has even led to such absurdities as the "look-and-feel" law suits of Apple and Microsoft dealing with concepts of controlling computers which neither party devised (Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center has that distinction). And in an apparent reversal of the idea of not patenting natural products, two corporations have been granted patents on chemicals (one derived, one synthesized) from the Brazilian Neem tree. Many of the uses of chemicals from such plants have long been known to natives of the area for exactly the same reasons; granting patents would seem to violate the principle that commonplace uses may not be patented. Although the US has always regarded the rest of the planet as its hunting ground, this usurpation of indigenous discoveries would also seem to be patenting someone else's work.

Some recent advocates of IPRs argue that because many of the biological products are derived from plants known by indigenous people (and sometimes used by them for the same purpose) the original "discoverers" (and often inventors, for the use of these drugs is often the result of generations of effort) should be rewarded commensurately. Some have also argued that food crops may be seen this way: the result of centuries of refinement and experimentation by indigenous people around the world. Some even see this archaic legal concept as a possible reinforcement of these people in their fight for survival and control over their lands.

Perhaps...but this begs the question of whether such "rights" are legitimate. It can be argued that even as such ideas are being hailed in the "third" world, they are being shown as outmoded impediments in the techno-sphere: information moves faster, and with more ambiguous ownership all the time. Indeed, given that human knowledge is such an enormously socialized (and historical) creation, no

They say the '90s will make the '80s look like the '50s, but what with the '80s also looking like the '20s, which in and of themselves were quite similar to the '10s (which were nothing at all like the '50s), we say the '90s will start out looking like the '60s, begin looking like the '40s after just one year, then wind up being just like the '70s. So...

THIS IS WHERE THE NINETIES BEGIN!



A CALL FOR FREEDOM RIDERS TO THE GRAND CANYON

This summer, students, civil rights activists, environmentalists, ranchers, Tupperware activists, workers, computer programmers, colorists, post-modernists, industrialists, labor leaders, retired army generals, insurance fraud detectors, truck drivers, yuppies, and everyone else for that matter, will be piling into busses, freight trains, tractor trailers, and cattle trucks to make that ultimate symbolic and final direct action statement. In an ultimate act of coalition building, we will all unite to become one, one whole cosmic entity, one whole mass of metal and bodies in a pile at the bottom of the greatest canyon on earth. So let's shoot our war guns in '91, send Columbus to Timbuktu in '92, and let's make North America...

Human-Free by '93!

graphic from Earth First! Journal, June 1991

Yes, we think this is "just" a joke!

invention can be said to be independent. The need for capital to harness such creations to make a profit is indisputable, and we should never forget the crucial question: "*quo vadis?*" ("who gains?").

Nor am I hopeful about the possibilities of enforcing such putative rights as may be won by whatever collective group. The ability to enforce such contracts is a precise measure of social power; groups with no power will find those rights insupportable. Countries like Brazil, with its long history of mistreatment of indigenous peoples, no less than the US, which has a long and almost unbroken record of ignoring its treaties with North American Indians, are not promising arenas for indigenous people to play out power relations. When one side writes the laws, owns the courts, and licenses the lawyers, as well as allows the vast budgets of the corporations free play, the other side, even if it is able to buy a few attorneys, cannot be said to be an equal. Bakunin's comment is relevant: "The law, in its majestic impartiality, forbids the rich as well as the poor from sleeping under bridges, begging, and stealing bread."

Casting the importance of nature in terms of property relations strengthens the abhorrent concept that wilderness and primal nature deserve protection because they are—or might be—useful.

There are further problems with imposing this western model on traditional societies: just as some North American tribes were never granted recognition by the US government because they had no leaders, the requirements of marketing and legal representation of IPRs will impose unique stresses on indigenous communities. Given movements towards control of traditional music and copyrighting materials, etc., the only aspects of traditional life that will survive may well be corporation's names, and a few patented commodities. Imagine a scenario in which some village elder sues another for copyright violations for performing a traditional song; perhaps in the name of ancestral spirits.

Such talk of "rights" also ignores some crucial questions about what the concept means: such "rights" are certainly not immutable things handed to us by nature; to the extent that there are any rights, it is because the common folk have fought for them. They were not, and never will be, given to us by benevolent masters. Those rights have always proved to be worthless in the absence of people willing to defend themselves (often outside of any legal process).

To frame our thinking about the exploitation of the other parts of the world in terms of ethics among property owners is to ignore the imperative of business: to make money. To try to use the very tools of business (law, property rights) to stop business, can't work.

It seems most unlikely that the road to human freedom and dignity passes through a courtroom and patent office. I regret that I have no better ideas for helping the poor people of such "developing" parts of the world as Brazil, but the idea that the concept of property, extended to more parts of the world, and to new "objects," will help preserve the parts not yet destroyed by the world capitalists, is not a sensible one. Perhaps this can be a tool of limited use, but to present it uncritically does us all a disservice.

—Primitivo Morales

See *Cultural Survival*, Summer 1991, "Intellectual Property Rights" for more on IPRs.

REPLY TO PRIMITIVO MORALES

Maybe this is not a very auspicious time (or place) to speak in favor of intellectual property. Of course, the argument could be extended. Across the political spectrum, we seem to be facing the 21st century with ideas inherited from the 19th century. It's fun to run in ideological circles, dancing with romanticism, communism, anarchism, nihilism, capitalism, post-this-and-thatism, careering from optimism to pessimism and back again, and throwing up our hands

"Sampling" in music and "reverse engineering" in manufacturing have made a mockery of the extension of property relations into the realm of intellectual creation.

when pressed for direction. But have we learned anything in the 20th century? Perhaps something about pragmatism.

In the first place, the argument in favor of recognizing the intellectual property rights of indigenous people was made by them, not us. Of course, one can trace the concept's history to the door of capitalism. But it is a system most indigenous people have trucked with quite extensively over the last century or more.

Intellectual property rights may be an argument of the moment. More likely, indigenous people see property as a tool they can grasp to increase their own power. In any case, the demand for intellectual property rights emerges logically from their demands for recognition of their property rights in land as well, which have also been an inconvenience to some.

Now they seek recognition of their knowledge, which until lately usually has been devalued even as it has been used by profiteers.

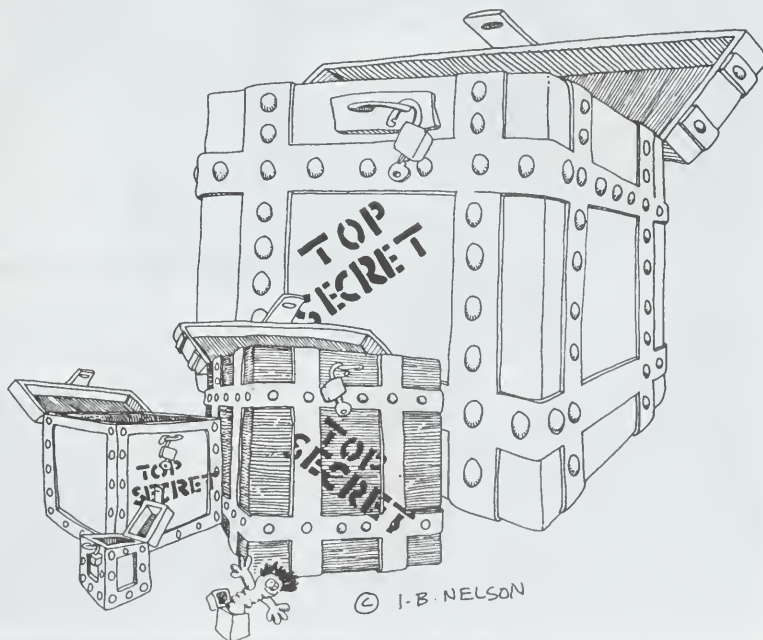
Unfortunately, pharmaceutical companies such as Merck and national governments such as Costa Rica are quickly cutting deals leaving out the local people who live in the tropical forests that are the sources of much of the world's biodiversity. And why not? The messy world of people vying for life in some backwoods is really just so much trouble. You're so right. There are too many practical problems with identifying the "inventors" of traditional knowledge, not to mention compensating often fractious communities.

But indigenous people have an inconvenient way of asserting themselves, especially it seems as we confront the millennium with such an intense love-hate relationship with technology and the nation state. Even as many late 20th century thinkers continue to see indigenous people somehow representing a state of society outside the market system, their demand for property rights presents a nagging problem.

Perhaps global positions—such as worshipping or demonizing the market in all cases—attempt to reach too far. Property rights can be a basic means of preserving local control. But property rights are clearly not a panacea, as history shows.

Information—and for that matter all kinds of property—may want to be free, as they like to say in Silicon Valley at the end of the 20th century. But property has costs and consequences and if you're lucky maybe benefits and profits. As a writer, marketing my words, I stand on the side of intellectual property rights, even though I will write for free. There are more important things than money and property. But that doesn't mean we have to turn our backs on them.

—Jon Christensen



graphic by J.B. Nelson

Judi Bari was born in Baltimore in 1949. She attended the University of Maryland, where she majored in anti-Vietnam War rioting. Since college credit is rarely given for such activities, Judi was soon forced to drop out of college with a political education but no degree. She then embarked on a 20-year career as a blue collar worker. During that time she became active in the union movement and helped lead two strikes—one of 17,000 grocery clerks in the Maryland/D.C./Virginia area (unsuccessful, smashed by the union bureaucrats) and one (successful) wildcat strike against the U.S. Postal Service at the Washington D.C. Bulk Mail Center.

In 1979 Judi moved to Northern California, got married and had babies. After her divorce in 1988, she supported her children by

working as a carpenter building yuppie houses out of old-growth redwood. It was this contradiction that sparked her interest in *Earth First!*

As an *Earth First!* organizer, Judi became a thorn in the side of Big Timber by bringing her labor experience and sympathies into the environmental movement. She built alliances with timber workers while blockading their operations, and named the timber corporations and their chief executive officers as being responsible for the destruction of the forest.

In 1990, while on a publicity tour for *Earth First!* Redwood Summer, Judi was nearly killed in a car-bomb assassination attempt. Although all evidence showed that the bomb was hidden under Judi's car seat and intended to kill her, police and FBI arrested her

(and colleague Darryl Cherney) for the bombing, saying that it was their bomb and they were knowingly carrying it. For the next eight weeks they were subjected to a police orchestrated campaign in the national and local press to make them appear guilty of the bombing. Finally the district attorney declined to press charges for lack of evidence. To this day the police have conducted no serious investigation of the bombing, and the bomber remains at large.

Crippled for life by the explosion, Judi has returned to her home in the redwood region and resumed her work in defense of the forest. She and Darryl are also suing the FBI and other police agencies for false arrest, presumption of guilt, and civil rights violations. Judi now lives in Willits, California with her two children.

A SHIT RAISER SPEAKS!

An Interview with Judi Bari

Chris Carlsson: Where do you stand on the Work Ethic?

Judi Bari: Totally against it. It is absolutely sick!

CC: What do you think of as "human nature" when it comes to work and useful activities? How does the existing order encourage or obstruct this "nature"? How does workplace organizing tap into this "nature"?

JB: I think people like to work if work is not alienated, not artificially constructed by the system that makes it pure hell, that goes against every instinct. But I think that work, meaning like what you need to do to provide sustenance, that in itself as a concept is not something that people mind. I think that working ridiculous amounts of hours including 8 a day or 40 a week is not "natural," but I think working is something that's natural and enjoyable and I think that without any work people in general would not feel comfortable. But work needs to be completely redefined from what it is right now. Now it is pure oppression. What did you say, 80% of work is unnecessary? Absolutely TRUE! Not only is it absolutely unnecessary, but the method by which it's organized is horrible. It goes against everything, you have to suppress every instinct of enjoyment that you have in

your being to go and put yourself in one of these stupid jobs. [laughter]

CC: And workplace organizing?

JB: Hey it makes work fun. I only had one job when I actually liked the job itself and that was being a carpenter. I enjoyed the job, I enjoyed being able to build something that was beautiful and I was proud of myself for being able to read the plans and figure it out. But all the other jobs I had I hated. Physically standing at a cash register, or unloading a truck or whatever, or standing at a bottling line, making the same motion over and over all day long. The jobs totally sucked, but organizing was really fun. It gave me something to think about and do at work. I'm not saying

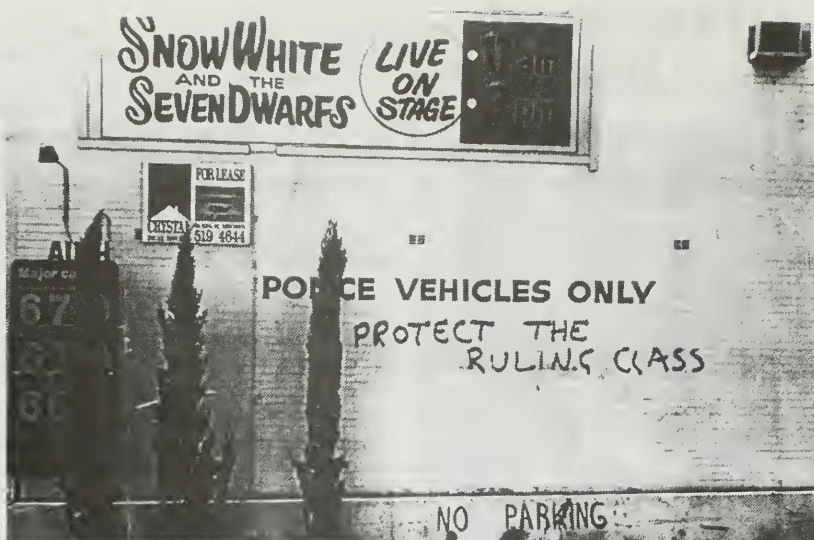
You have to suppress every instinct . . . to put yourself in one of these stupid jobs . . . Working ridiculous numbers of hours, including 8 a day and 40 a week, is not "natural."

"would the end result of organizing under capitalism be an enjoyable job?"

— No! We have to completely rearrange the way we work and what we call work before it would be enjoyable. But what do we do in the meantime while we're waiting for the revolution? The only way to be able to stand a job is to raise shit there. That's just personal experience, that's not political theory. [laughter]

I [had] a job at a post office factory. Everybody worked under one roof and the conditions were outrageous. It was 85% black, mostly from the inner city, right across the Maryland line in the inner suburbs. We didn't even bother with any of the three different unions or their meetings. We did direct action on the workroom floor, put out an outrageous newsletter [Postal Strife] that was real funny, lampooning management. We weren't allowed to strike against the government, that was illegal and we'd get fired, so we had a "walk-in" where we met on both shifts and walked into the manager's office. We had sick-outs and slow-downs and trash-ins and sabotage days, and we got control of the whole factory—it also took about one-and-a-half years. It peaked in a wildcat strike which was actually successful.

[Postal Strife] wasn't just reporting on things... it was instigating things.



One time the safe was locked (with our paychecks) and we were on night shift, and the only key was at Miss Julie's house, she lived in Virginia, so we formed a posse in the middle of the workroom floor, and we were about to walk out and drive to her house at 11:30 at night, and they suddenly found the key. [laughter] We had real raw power, OK? When we had the strike and after we walked out on strike the union fell apart and we got the control of the union. That's when we really got power. Then we had the official power, and the respect of the workers, which was based on real direct action and real self-empowerment, so we started substantially changing the working conditions, including sneaking a Jack Anderson reporter in, and got two national articles written about the place.

I didn't have to work anymore. I used to spend my whole day on the shop floor. I used to have to sneak out to do these little things, but then when I was Shop Steward I could spend the whole day, 8 hours a day, raising hell, it was great! I got paid for it! We really changed the working conditions, we changed the personnel, and they weren't getting away with shit. And what happened is that the working conditions got better.

I was the Chief Shop Steward and the coalition began settling for things and selling out and things began to fall apart, so now we worked 40 hours a week instead of 60-80, the supervisors weren't as nasty to us, it wasn't as dangerous and the new people that came in started to be more conservative. Some of the real radicals started to be

less radical. I knew, the manager didn't know, but I knew that we no longer had the support on the shop floor. So I was living on a shell, I could get this guy to give up grievances because he thought that I could mobilize the workroom floor with the snap of a finger. The fact is I couldn't anymore, because people had gotten way conservative because working conditions were better. I quit to move to California before he figured out that we didn't really have rank and file power anymore. But we really did, and the peak was when we assumed official power after the strike, before it got so soft that people got conservative.

CC: In retrospect, do you imagine you should have gone in a different direction after you got official power to avoid this "bourgeois-ification"?

JB: I don't know. The problem is that our goals were limited. It doesn't matter how good we were, the biggest thing we were asking for was better working conditions for our factory that employed 800 people. We weren't asking to overthrow the wage system, we didn't have a political context in which we were operating, other than using very radical tactics to win workers' demands. Maybe it would have moved someplace else, maybe another factory that we were working with, or maybe it would be another issue, but we would have had to have some kind of thing that went beyond those narrow demands.

CC: Because those are satisfiable, essentially?

JB: Yeah, without changing the basic problem, y'know, which is this whole industrial organization, etc.

CC: Did you keep in touch with this place after you left? Did they go through a big wave of automation and restructuring?

JB: I still have some friends there, but no, it's still the same old machinery. They combined some of the functions, but it's basically the same structure. All of the gains that were made were all lost. The bulk mail wave of restructuring was in the '70s, I don't know what happened in the '80s except that we lost all the gains. All the bulk mail centers had these really bad working conditions, and throughout the history of them there were lots of spontaneous walkouts, that never led to better conditions. The difference was that our effort did. There were 3 places that went on strike when we did: New York, Richmond California and us, and we were the only ones that didn't get fired. The rest of them all got fired. They lost their demands. Since we were not even part of a larger postal group, we weren't even part of a TDU [Teamsters for a Democratic Union]. We were just a single factory, we communicated with the other ones that went on strike, but there wasn't any larger organization at all, there wasn't even a way of spreading it throughout the postal workers, much less expanding it to larger demands. I think that's one of the reasons why it was so easy and successful, is that it was such a small movement with limited demands. But that doesn't mean it wasn't a good thing to do because it gave people the experience of successful collective action, probably the first in their lives.

CC: Maybe their last.

JB: Yeah, right. Now it's this legend, this thing that happened in the past, and everything settled back to the way it used to be... and the postal workers have lost a lot of ground. The postal workers had a nationwide wildcat strike. It was the most recent nationwide wildcat and that's when they won collective bargaining rights, believe it or not, it was 1970. They didn't even have integrated unions in 1970. The US Post Office had a black union and a white union! Isn't that amazing? There was a spontaneous rebellion against really bad conditions, but back in 1970 the postal workers had a lot of power, a lot more than they knew, because at any one time 25% of the U.S.'s monetary supply was tied up in the mail, OK? When they called in the Army to break the strike (the postal workers have an inordinate number of

Army veterans because they give you a 10 point preference on the test if you're a veteran), a lot of them were sympathetic because of the other Army people that worked there. So the Army people that were brought in—well, the workers sabbed [sabotaged] the stuff as much as they could, and a lot of the Army people contributed to sabbing it, and fucked everything up. So they got really fucked up in a very short time, it was like a one week strike, and the whole mail was tied up in knots, and a big piece of the monetary supply, so they had to settle the strike, and they recognized bargaining power in 1970 for a national union. I don't know of any other national union that was first recognized in 1970, or even anywhere near that. Now, with fax machines and electronic funds transfer, the postal workers have much less economic power than they did in 1970. They wouldn't even have the capacity to pull off such a strike if they wanted to.

CC: Get ready for the privatization of mail.

JB: Oh, absolutely!

CC: The fact is that most of what we do is a waste of time. Our politics has to really emphasize the uselessness of work. That has to be upfront.

JB: We really do our political work in different cultures. Yours is one that is at the forward end of the technological bullshit, in the evolution of the society from industrial to technological. But I'm working with retro, with what's left of the old industrial proletariat. So I think there's different value systems at play. The work ethic is very important. One of the reasons why the timber workers will relate to me more than most environmentalists is because they know I am by career a blue collar worker. The idea of not working is really offensive to them, in fact, that's the big thing they always say to the hippies, "why don't these people get a job?" So what do we say? "Cut your job, get some hair!" [laughter] I live in a place where they shaved hippies' dreadlocks in jail, I mean, what year is this? We're living in a time warp. Really, we're talking about different centuries here, certainly different decades.

Med-o: Chris and I have talked about this a lot: How do you organize people to get rid of their jobs? How do workers get organized with their main purpose to eliminate their jobs?

JB: There needs to be some other vision of what there is to do. I don't really see us at that stage yet. We know

this is wrong. We know that this is NOT it, whatever it is, it's not this. [laughter] And I think people can relate to that, and it gives them room for their own creativity. I think I have a problem with organizers feeling like they have to have all the answers, NOW. Part of the problem is that we have to think collectively and figure it out, and it has to be based on our collective experience. And we haven't even had that experience yet!

CC: How do you feel about the average person's ability to participate in a process like that? I think everybody's got a great capacity for thought, but I don't think very many people have much experience or practice or natural native talent for cooperative group processes.

JB: Well, I don't know about native talent, it's certainly been bred out of us. It's a problem trying to organize in this society—I don't think there's ever been a society as brainwashed as this one. The whole workplace, the way it's set up is designed to make you into an automaton. It's hard but those little glimmers that we do get ARE so much more fun and so much more fulfilling than anything anybody's done in their life.

CC: A lot of time the things that cause people to band together in union, whether it's a legal institution or not (I personally favor the informal approach)—I think a lot of times the impulses that get people motivated to take that kind of action are somewhat conservative. They're worried, they're afraid, they want to defend themselves. They're not really looking at the big picture, and saying "well, jeez, this whole way of life is ridiculous and some bigger change has to happen." Now I'm not saying some kind of religious transformation has to take place across the planet—all of a sudden everybody agrees that it's all bullshit and let's stop and do something else, but I don't see much hope for a political movement based on worker organizing that doesn't have at least its eyes set on that goal.

JB: Yeah because the whole way we work is ridiculous. People are really alienated from the way that they work because it's ridiculous.

CC: People are pretty afraid to embrace that kind of vision.

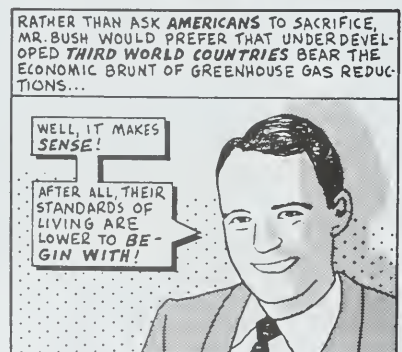
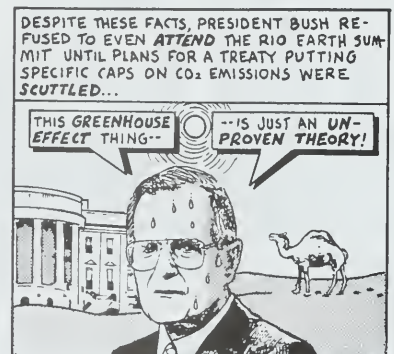
JB: Because you don't just start from that. You have to start where people are. You have to have one eye on where people are and one eye on where we wanna be. To try to start from way

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



graphic by Tom Tomorrow



Don't miss *Greetings From This Modern World*, by Tom Tomorrow, St. Martin's Press (1992). Only \$7.95!

TM: 10/14/94 © 1994

here, that may scare people off. But after they have a little experience with self-empowerment through a movement, then more broad ideas come up and begin to be discussed, and people become more open to more ideas when they start seeing change and start seeing that they're able to make change. It doesn't mean you have to start within these little narrow confines, but you can't be so miles out in front of people that they can't relate to what you're saying.

CC: I agree with that, but often times an idea as simple and direct as "most of the work we do is a waste of time and no one should do it" is treated as an out-of-bounds idea.

JB: No, people love it! Everybody agrees. But after that idea comes, you have to ask "can we do anything about it?"

CC: Right.

JB: I guess that's where it's an out-of-bounds idea, it's that they don't think that there's anything they can do about it. I think that's because people haven't experienced collective action.

CC: You said that we have to go to where people are. Now that's often a code expression for bread and butter issues.

JB: No, I didn't say we have to go where people are, I said we have to keep one eye on where people are and one eye on where we wanna be, that's different than saying we have to go where people are.

CC: You're still in a perspective where you're making certain analytical judgments about where people are, and trying to reach to that position from another position that you don't think they're ready for yet.

JB: No, it's not that I don't think they're ready for my vision of a perfect world, since I don't even know my vision yet. I gotta interact with the people to find out WHAT we are collectively capable of doing. It's not just my ideas to be imposed on the group, it's that we're gonna get this group together and see where our collective ideas take us.

CC: The incredible power of recuperation... That's why I keep stumbling around these questions of vision, what's going to inspire people in a passionate way to get out of the box? The logic of immediate issues, whatever they might be, tends to be rooted in a conservative impulse, a defensive strategy. The notion that people are gonna somehow engage in

a "process" around that, and that's going to lead to a day when they have a broader, more assertive life... I don't see why one would lead to the other at all.

JB: OK. Well, let's look at it up here, because this is a different situation, it's much less a traditional workerist kind of thing. What we have is this dual economy and dual culture—marijuana, timber, hippies, stompers, so we have these two kind of parallel things. The most significant thing that this small group that I work with has done is to link the two. We've got this back-to-the-land movement grown up 20 years, a whole generation older now with adult kids. People have experimented with "simple lifestyles," and ended up in hippie palaces. There's kind of this vision of ecotopia, of a society that lives in harmony with the earth and with each other, and offers a new way of relating and organizing the whole of society, right? It's a larger vision. The shorter thing we've fought life and death battles over is the survival of the ecosystem—really trial by fire out here. We've won some really important victories, but by and large the county's been clearcut. Now what's happening is that the timber companies are leaving, they're done, they're packing up and leaving. Normally what happens at this stage is gentrification comes in, the wineries and the yuppies, and all that stuff, and marching behind that comes real estate development.

So now we're at a turning point, and I am absolutely not predicting that this is going to happen because we're up against tremendous forces, including the fact that they're willing to kill and use sophisticated psychological operations and all this other stuff. So now we're at this place where the timber companies are leaving, and what is there in their place? Well there's this big movement now for some economy based on restoration. The money of course is going to have to come from outside, because our resource base has been removed via clearcutting. There's lots of poverty pimp money being thrown for other things, they're talking about spending \$200 million to buy forest parcels from Hurwitz, and we say he doesn't own it, he crashed an S&L to get the money to work with Michael Milkin to take over Pacific Lumber, so debt-for-nature swap—don't give any money to Hurwitz, the same money you've got to pay off Hurwitz should go to the community to fund an economy based

on restoring the forest. In the process of restoration there's some products that can come out of it, but I don't think there's enough to base an economy on. But some kind of alternative economy—Willits calls itself the Solar Capital of the World, and they have all these little solar experiments, and solar cars. Then there's the marijuana economy, and the hemp movement. So now we're at this juncture where it can either go the traditional way of moving into gentrification or we could seize the initiative here at this particular juncture to turn away from the traditional capitalist model and try to find another way to do it. Then I think it could be theoretically possible. I think the only way it could happen, what I think I got almost killed for, is you've got all this timber land that's totally trashed out, and if it isn't held in trust for a long time the whole ecosystem is going to collapse. The only way that [getting the land into trust] could happen would be if the county used its power of eminent domain to seize all the corporate timberlands... Well, I guess they'd come in with the tanks, it would never happen, would it?

CC: So what's going to excite people now? Certainly it's not because they're workers that they're going to get involved with anything. On the other hand, as we know perfectly well, the real social power that exists to really fuck with the system is found in the workplace. So there's strategic power there, but it's not necessary that there be this psychological identification... It's basic to Wobbly philosophy and to most proponents of labor organizing, that you have to somehow act on your social function as a worker, as opposed to thinking about taking advantage of the strategic power at work as a part of something else—

JB: We worked with the workers on workplace issues, and we formed alliances on broader issues, and pretty soon the workers that we were defending on the PCB spills were defending us on the destruction of the forest. So the people in Earth First! who say I'm a sell-out for wanting to work with workers in extractive industries, well, I call it the "Future Ex-Logger Coalition" because by the time that they're ready to work with us, they've had it with the job.

CC: So do you think they really embrace an ecological agenda?

JB: Oh well they certainly do, yeah. In fact, interestingly...when I inter-

viewed workers I asked about working conditions. But what made them begin to question the company in many cases were sentiments like "I went out to my favorite spot and it was gone. You know I used to take my son fishing, and now there's no more fish." One of the episodes at the Fort Bragg rally was the famous dramatic confrontation in the middle of town when the Earth First! rally comes face to face with the yellow-ribbon-waving-crazed-drunk-alcoholic-abusive ranting and raving, and we offer them the microphone. These three loggers get up there and the first two just rage, and then the third one gets up, and he's 5th generation with the whole accent, and the whole trip, (we didn't know him, he was not a plant, he was somebody we'd never worked with before), and he said "You all know me, I grew up with you." He addressed the loggers, and he said "I used to log in the summer and fish in the winter, and now there's no more logs and no more fish. I never wanted to put my family on welfare, but I put my family on welfare because I can't do this anymore, I can't keep destroying this place I love." And he said he was going to dedicate his life to opening a recycling center, so he can have right livelihood. There is a group of ex-timber workers who want to do some kind of reparations and right livelihood. The coalition of people who criticized us from the environmental movement, who criticized us for advocating the interests of extractive industry workers, they don't understand what we're doing at all. Not in any way, shape or form are we advocating traditional unionism, even though we had Georgia Pacific workers wearing IWW buttons to work. These [logging] companies are almost done, they're outta here. Right now Georgia Pacific's redwood section is less than 1% of the overall operation. It's basically a pulp and paper company, primarily based in the south. Then they have this little Western Division up here that does redwood, and it consists of one big mill. Before they would recognize a Wobbly union they would definitely close the mill. There's just no question that we don't have a single chance in organizing for traditional labor goals. We're looking at an industry that's on its way out. What we're talking about is what we're going to do after it leaves, and how we're going to seize control of our community so that we CAN do what we think needs to be done after it leaves. That's the broader question that we're working on, is community control of our community so that it won't be turned into yuppies, and the

timber workers won't be displaced. Right now we're controlled by out-of-state corporations.

CC: I wonder how you imagine controlling the outside capital that might be coming in?

JB: I don't think you can solve all the problems without a revolution! We advocated for the workers who got PCB dumped on them, we advocated for the worker who got killed in a Ukiah mill and got criminal charges brought against Louisiana-Pacific, we interviewed workers about their working conditions, but that's the narrower thing, and we're also talking about this broader thing of resource destruction, of out-of-town evil corporation. The alli-

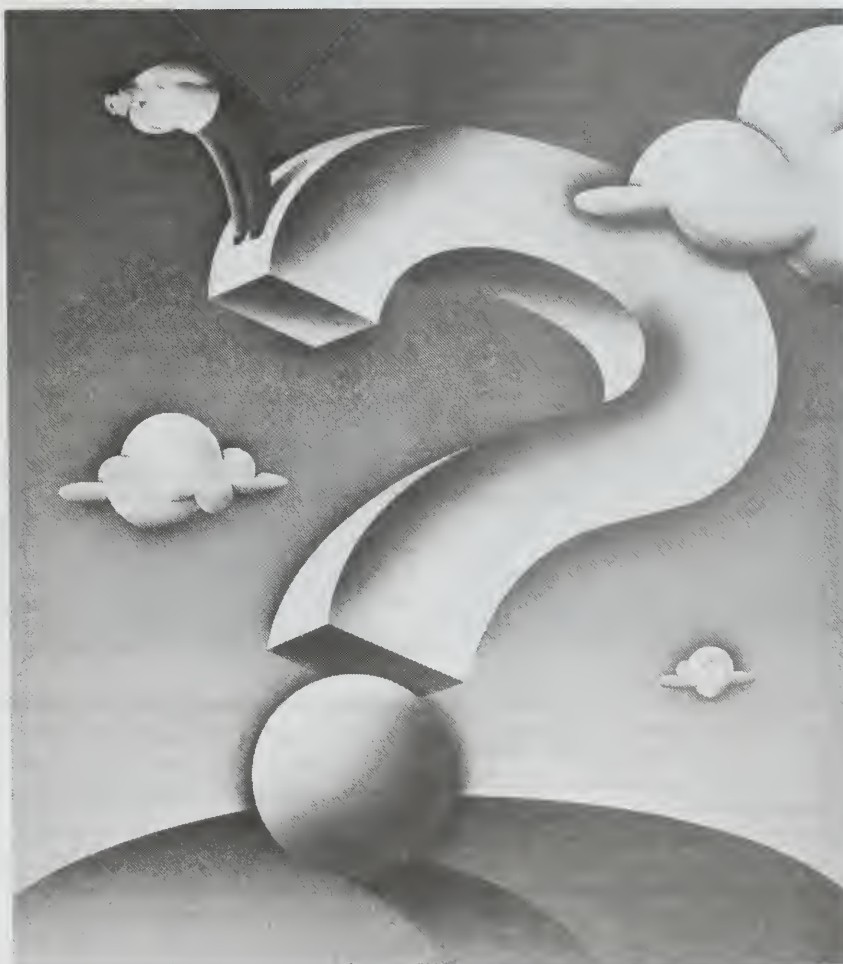
ance with workers based on workplace issues has been translated into a larger question of the resource base, and the height that it got to was demanding the eminent domain seizure of the timber industry by the county.

CC: Socialism in Mendocino County!

JB: You know what happened after we did that, besides that they tried to kill me for it... We started from workplace problems, we went to resource destruction, and then we started to demand eminent domain seizure. That was certainly taking it into a broader context!

by Chris Carlsson and Med-o, April 20, 1992 in Mendocino County.

MY JOB:



graphic by Chris Carlsson

WHAT'S THE POINT?

PROCESSED SHIT: Capitalism, Racism and Entropy

Dedicurse: *this essay is dedicated to the hope that, if there is an afterlife, Daniel Moynihan, Mickey Kaus, and all the other "black underclass pathologies" demagogues will spend it on welfare in a public housing project, trying to find a job and to avoid getting beaten or shot by the police.*

The Heart of Whiteness

Judeo-Christian culture has long had a problem with dirt and darkness. Whiteness has been Europe's symbol of purity, goodness, life, order, and the divine. (By contrast, consider classical Chinese culture, in which whiteness symbolizes death, and is worn at funerals.) Blackness or darkness, on the other hand, has traditionally connoted impurity, evil, death, disorder, and the satanic.

For centuries, the dominant European ideal of human beauty stressed white skin. The most obvious reason for this is that reddened or tanned skin meant exposure to sun, wind, and rain. Since feudal society was agrarian, such exposure in a young person (or in a woman of any age) implied *work*—commonly in the fields. The arbiters of taste were aristocrats, for whom the absolute avoidance of work was crucial to class self-definition. The aristocratic ideal of beauty, still current today, was shaped by all the signs of distance from work—the build athletic rather than massive in a man, narrow-boned yet voluptuously fleshed in a woman, the hands small or at any rate narrow, with tapered fingers, and so forth. Distance from work in a mainly agricultural society also meant distance from *dirt*, from contact with the soil. To this day, "soiled" means dirty, just as dark means evil or threatening. (Signifiers of class and wealth still underlie our aesthetic and moral values. Consider the terms "noble" and "base" as applied to human conduct, the derivation of our word "villain" from *vileyn*, serf, and the con-

vergence of *vileyn* with "vile" through the Latin *vilis*, cheap.)

This cultural complex allowed Europeans to enslave and slaughter Africans and Native Americans with a clearer conscience than would otherwise have been possible. Of course the expansionist and exclusive character of institutionalized Christianity was the ideological linchpin of the "Age of Discovery," as it had been of the Age of the Crusades. (In fairness, it is worth remembering that during the Crusades Christian culture was fighting a severe challenge by another expansionist and much more sophisticated culture, Islam.) Christianity divides human beings into wheat and chaff, Saved and Damned, allowing them no middle ground once the Word of the One True God has been preached to them. This absolute division of the world, with its own white/black symbolism, was superimposed on the aristocratic dualism of white noble, dark base.

Underlying the Christian and aristocratic dichotomies was another more ancient one, the Graeco-Roman division of humanity into civilized versus "barbarian" or "savage" peoples. (The derivations of the latter put-downs are, respectively, people whose speech sounds to us like animal noises and people who live in the forest instead of cultivating fields.) For several centuries before the Age of Slavery, the European ruling classes had been convincing

themselves that they were the civilized and that the Arabs and Persians, despite their splendid architecture, literature, science, and mathematics, were the barbarians. Encountering the tribal peoples of West Africa, Eastern North America, and Mexico, who neither used the wheel nor smelted iron, the Discoverers could feel sure of their superiority and God-given right to exploit. Better yet, these peoples were possessed of more melanin in their skins than most Europeans, and so could be fitted into the cultural slot labelled black or dark—which meant at best chaotic, ignorant, dirty, and impure, and at worst menacing, vicious, and evil.

The wealth looted from the land, artifacts, and bodies of Africa and America provided the fuel for the lift-off of commerce in Europe. The gold and silver mined by Indian slaves in Mexico and Peru, the cotton, sugar, and tobacco harvested by African slaves in the Caribbean, created the wealth that was used to buy pale-skinned wage labor. It was in the seventeenth century, when the slave trade was soaring, that the notion of Europeans as white first appeared. The aristocratic signifier had been spread to include all Europeans, whether noble, base, or in between. Thus, alongside capitalism, twinned with it, was born modern racism.

As Europeans and Euro-Americans lived with African slaves—and fought Native Americans for undisputed control of the continent—the process of stereotyping and otherizing advanced rapidly¹. By the middle of the nineteenth century Euro-Americans seem to have been almost incapable of seeing African-Americans, slave or free, as human beings. Even Mark Twain, conceiving a sympathetic figure in Jim, can only show the runaway slave as a pathetic victim. Jim's very speech is misrepresented, and by the writer who first set down varieties of Euro-American vernacular with such care. Yet describing the episode when Huck listens to the white raft-men talking, Twain gives the game away. Its the raft-men's game, a

Capitalist accumulation produces order at one pole and entropy at the other—or else organized shit (capital) at one pole and disorganized shit (misery and pollution) at the other. The symbolic shittiness of wealth is the dirty secret of white-capitalist-patriarchal culture.



graphic by Adam Cornford

Miles Davis translates Nat Turner.

ritual of trading hyperbolic and poetic boasts, and it comes straight out of West Africa. The repressed returns, announcing that Twain's blindness and deafness are willful; they are necessitated by guilty awareness of slavery's intimate and inextricable role in the founding of a "free" nation—and by the fact that, as Albert Murray observes in *The Omni-Americans*, "American cul-

ture... is, regardless of all the hysterical protestations of those who would have it otherwise, incontestably mulatto."

In his *White Racism: A Psychohistory*, Joel Kovel has shown how U.S. racism bifurcates between North and South. In the South, where whites grew up in intimate daily contact with black slaves and servants, the signifier of difference is supposed relative intelligence and

development: Africans are childlike and must be ruled by whites for their own good. They are not feared or loathed as such, except when they get "uppity" and "don't know their place." Racial contact pollutes in only one way: through sex. Euro-patriarchy must not be challenged, either by the legitimization of mixed-race offspring (though children from a long-term liaison with a female

slave may be treated with the kindness due pets) or above all by sex between a black man and a white woman. In the North, where despite the historically better legal status of black people the races have actually had less contact, a subliminal fear of dirt and pollution is characteristic of what Kovel calls aversive racism. Studies of Northern racist whites reveal bizarre fantasies of black skin color rubbing off on them when touched. The psychodynamic connection between these two forms of racism can be intuitively grasped when we remember that "dirty" in Anglo-American culture is a synonym for openly erotic.

Social Thermodynamics

Nothing I have said so far is new. Less easily recognized is the relationship between how European or Euro-American culture understands "dirt" and the thermodynamical principle of *entropy* as applied to political economy and culture.

Thermodynamics defines entropy as a measure of the disorder in a closed thermodynamical system. Since no system is 100% efficient, some energy must eventually become unavailable for work (meaning here the self-reproduction of the system's order). Energy that is not available for work causes disorder. To maintain order, therefore, a system must expel this disorder. For example, exhaust products (carbon monoxide and dioxide and waste heat) are entropy expelled by a working auto engine to maintain its order as a system. The living human body sheds entropy as heat, as excreta (carbon dioxide, sweat and urine), as mucus carrying dead bacteria and other rejected matter, as dead skin cells, and of course as shit.

Human societies are organized self-reproducing systems. In principle, then, this thermodynamical model can be extended to cover any society. What changes from one to another is the mode of order, and therefore what each one defines as work and energy. Capitalist industrial society, which engendered thermodynamical theory in the first place, defines "real" work as activity that gives rise to profit and is performed in exchange for money. Activity necessary for social reproduction that fails to meet one or both of these criteria is experienced as a drain on the system. This includes all the work of government, all paid nonprofit work such as public education or health care, unpaid cultur-

al activity like writing poems or playing music for one's friends, and of course unpaid domestic work.

"Activity that gives rise to profit" has evolved as capitalism has developed. To begin with, such activity was virtually synonymous with the production and distribution of material goods. Marx, however, was quick to see that production for capitalism means above all the production of capital, which in turn (and more profoundly) means the reproduction of capitalist social relationships: paid work and the universal market. What is more, said Marx, because profits plateau and decline as industries mature, this reproduction depends on "growth." It cannot maintain itself in a steady state. Growth for capitalism means more profit for capitalists, more work done, more commodities sold—but this depends on more people being wage earners and commodity consumers, more areas of the world and of social existence being brought into the cycle of work-pay-sell-buy-profit. Capitalism must, therefore, convert more and more kinds of human activity into work.

While constantly redefining work, capitalism also constantly strives to reduce the amount of work-time taken to produce any given commodity—and to shorten the time capital needs to circulate from work done, via merchandise sold, to profit taken. Consequently capitalism is, as its publicists never cease to remind us, always creating technological revolutions. This technological dynamism means that capitalism continually redefines energy as well, which in a thermodynamic sense means not only power sources but raw materials.

A global system that must perpetually expand and change in order to survive, that is continually creating new technologies, and that defines work at once so narrowly and so broadly, is likely to generate many forms of entropy. Most obviously, this means all sorts of industrial waste: "traditional" emissions like heat, carbon dioxide, and soot, an ever-widening rainbow of toxic chemicals, and various radiation hazards. Increasingly such pollutants are rivalled in destructiveness by consumption waste such as packaging and disposables of all sorts, carbon dioxide and nitrous/nitric oxide from car exhausts, and toxic household cleaners.

This entropic Niagara produces other lethal disorders, not least in the human body. Work-related illnesses

from silicosis to carpal-tunnel syndrome, the cancer clusters blooming around refineries and nuclear plants, join the traditional diseases of malnutrition and overcrowding triggered by three centuries of market forces shoving people off their land or out of their jobs. And as everyone knows, the disorder spewed out by the frantic global search for profits is ripping huge holes in the ecological fabric—holes in the ozone layer, holes in the rainforests, holes in the webs of animal and plant species, and holes in the census figures around places like Bhopal or Chernobyl.

Beyond these, capitalist economies also generate behavioral and social forms of energy unavailable for "work" in the other sense of social reproduction. These include property crime from car burglary to securities fraud; violent crime caused by poverty and frustration; and, in a feedback loop with these, drug and alcohol addiction. Shifts in land and labor prices also engender forced migration and homelessness—immense disruptions in demographic patterns and in people's daily lives. The other immense disruption, of course, is war, whether fought directly over markets and resources, or over some ethnic rivalry with economic shock and stress as a contributing cause.

Yet any thermodynamical system actually has two options in regard to energy that becomes unavailable for work: dumping it, or recycling it.² Just now, capitalism is not doing very well at recycling much of its entropy, especially the chemical varieties. At recycling *people*, however, capitalism has always been unsurpassed. In the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rich English landowners turned many of their tenants loose because the shift from diverse farming to the more profitable monoculture of sheep required more range and fewer workers. They also expelled freeholding peasants from traditionally common land they had enclosed for their own use. This dumped surplus population wandered the countryside as beggars and thieves, causing a perpetual problem for the rural social order. Some drifted into the towns, where they were likewise experienced as entropic. But gradually, nascent manufacturing began recycling them as wage-workers. Once capitalism in both agriculture and industry got off the ground in the late eighteenth century, the flow of work-energy from the land to the cities became a flood, which contin-

ues to this day.

Capitalism is so effective at recycling work-energy because it treats work as a commodity and therefore as *abstract*. Kinds of work are interchangeable, valued solely according to their ability to produce profit. (Thermodynamics, as the *Midnight Notes* group has pointed out, originated during the same epoch as Frederick Taylor's "scientific management," which aimed to break industrial work down into small, mindless units for greater efficiency.) In fact, Harry Braverman, David Noble, and others have shown how the whole history of capitalist technology and management techniques is the effort to make labor more interchangeable—and thereby to make workers more dispensable and less powerful. However, capital's recycling of work-energy runs afoul of the system's periodic crises. Theorists

differ as to the inner cause of these crises. All of them, though, appear as a situation in which there is plenty of plant and equipment on one side and plenty of workers on the other, but in which the liquid capital cannot be found to bring the two together. The result is very high rates of both unemployment and corporate bankruptcy.

If the crisis is short enough, the effects for the system can be quite beneficial; and today, governments are able through fiscal and monetary policy to manage crisis to capital's advantage, even to bring on recessions at will (as the Federal Reserve did in 1979-82). Perhaps the most important benefit of a controlled crisis is its disciplining of workers. High unemployment makes resistance to intensified exploitation difficult, and wages can be reduced because workers are desperate. Once the

new cycle starts, moreover, there is a large pool of labor available for new ventures and for expansion. But if the crisis becomes too deep and prolonged, like the Great Depression of the '30s, the human energy made unavailable for work becomes violently entropic. The unemployed and the poor demonstrate and riot; and if they form alliances with the employed, as they did then, there is potential for mass strikes and even insurrection. Keeping the entropic energy of the unemployed and the poor from contaminating the employed working class is a continuing project for the system.

Dealing Dirt & Getting Shit

Having outlined something of the range of socially generated entropy and the ways capitalism deals with it, I would like to stretch the notion a little



graphic by Adam Comford

Coleman Hawkins and Duke Ellington riff on surplus value.

further to cover the realms of culture and the personality. Once again I must retrace some familiar ground. Capitalist culture, as the likes of Max Weber and R.H. Tawney have demonstrated, rests on the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which adapted the basic structures of Judeo-Christian patriarchy to fit new psychosocial needs. Protestantism, especially Calvinism, exalts thrift, the accumulation of wealth, and hard work. That is, it favors the exchange of living time for congealed dead time in the form of commodities and money, which are then accumulated. As a corollary, Protestantism preaches sexual continence, the conservation of erotic energy. Patriarchal cultures have often been anxious about the release of sperm—the Hindu theory of *prana* is one example. But in bourgeois-Protestant culture, sperm is viewed as a form of capital, which must, in the seventeenth-century phrase, be “spent” productively in begetting children. And if sperm is capital, the womb for patriarchy has always been land, the realest of real property. By making the womb-soil fruitful, the Protestant bourgeois not only continues his bloodline—the aim of all patriarchs—but invests in the future, founds or continues a family firm.

All this requires strict discipline. Thus, mainline Protestant culture from Luther on inculcates hierarchical obedience to one’s elders and betters, beginning with the State—so long as the State permits one to worship the Protestant God and accumulate a Godly fortune. It also demands, as Freud saw, deferral of gratification to a degree rare in precapitalist societies, and thus much emotional and sensual repression and rechanneling. The personality created in this image is controlled primarily through guilt, though shame is also an important spur. To inculcate and reinforce self-discipline, violence is often necessary. As in most patriarchies, death and mutilation are a State monopoly, but lesser violences such as beating are the prerogatives of every father-husband.

For this configuration, which I will call “accumulationist,” cultural entropy consists first of all of “wasteful” or “unproductive” behavior: free spending rather than saving, sexual promiscuity and sensuality, the open expression of passionate feeling, and of course laziness. Female sexuality is viewed with fascinated dread, since it can lead to all the other forms of cultural disorder, beginning with illegitimate children.

Sex between men is an abomination. Since the accumulation of property is the chief goal of life, lack of respect for property, such as trespass, is crime on a par with violence against one’s betters, and theft must be savagely punished. The flouting of hierarchy (once feudalism and the Church of Rome have been defeated) is likewise a dire threat, as is the unlicensed use of violence.

One common way for cultures—and individuals—to deal with anxiety about forbidden traits or behaviors is to project them outwards as defining attributes of some demonized Other. As capitalism developed through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the European and Euro-American



bourgeoisies came to project entropic characteristics onto the poor of their own cities as well as onto the peoples of Africa and India they were colonizing. “Half devil and half child,” Kipling would call these peoples in “The White Man’s Burden”; but nineteenth-century manufacturers said much the same of their workers (many of whom up to the 1860s were actual children). Poor people were viewed by the propertied classes as lazy, promiscuous, larcenous, drunken, and spendthrift.

There was truth, of a kind, to the stereotype. Long hours of repetitive toil produce boredom, exhaustion, and consequent sluggishness. People who live from week to week cannot save their

money even if they had the incentive. Poverty and forced migration in search of work disrupt familial and communal ties and drive people to theft and prostitution. Drunkenness and senseless violence are consequences of deprivation and despair. Unlicensed forms of sexual behavior offer some of the few pleasures that can be had without money.

This unruly proletariat, mostly only one generation removed from the countryside, was only converted into a stable and respectable working class through a long acculturation. It also involved enormous State violence. In the end, relative stability was only achieved by introducing machinery that made it possible to squeeze more production out of workers without lengthening the working day.

Once the “respectable” working class was established in the U.S. during the last third of the nineteenth century, the same entropic characteristics were projected onto other Others: onto the lumpenproletariat or criminal classes; onto the Irish; onto immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe;¹ onto Indians and Mexicans; and above all and continuously, onto black people. And, as in the case of the earlier projection onto the poor, the projective fantasy was partly self-fulfilling, a materialized ill-wish or exorcism.

There is one crucial component to this exorcism that I have not mentioned: dirt. As we have seen, feudalism defined dirt (at least on face, hands, or clothes) as a signifier of low social status. The rising capitalist class, by its nature, had to be a lot closer to work than had the aristocracy—and it had to reverse the polarity of the aristocracy’s disdain for money-grubbing. It developed an even more passionate aversion to dirt, summed up in the famous Victorian maxim “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” But feudal dirt differs from capitalist dirt. Feudal dirt is the sign of closeness to work and the earth. Capitalist dirt, being mostly industrial effluent or the grime of destitution, is likewise associated with work—but also with poverty, waste, and the absence of Protestant bourgeois values. It is, one might say, visible entropy. Like the poor themselves, dirt is a product of capitalist accumulation that the capitalist class does not want to see or smell.

The dirtiest dirt, of course, is shit. Shit’s meaning in capitalist culture, however, is profoundly ambiguous. In *The Ontogenesis of Money*, the psychologist

Sandor Ferenczi suggests that the anal retentive stage of infancy lays the foundation for the accumulationist, exchange-oriented bourgeois personality. When the child being toilet-trained deliberately holds her shit back, she gains attention and rewards for releasing it at the set time. Thus she learns to *retain*, to delay gratification, and to exchange one pleasure for another. She also becomes more self-contained, more aware of her own desires as distinct from those of others. To the bourgeois unconscious, then, shit is wealth—but only when you can't see it.

Bourgeois wealth grows out of shit, and produces shit. Capitalism, Marx says, creates wealth at one pole of accumulation and poverty at the other. One could paraphrase this by saying that capitalist accumulation produces order at one pole and entropy at the other—or else organized shit (capital) at one pole and disorganized shit (misery and pollution) at the other. The symbolic shittiness of wealth is the dirty secret of white-capitalist-patriarchal culture. Milan Kundera, in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, says that kitsch is the denial of shit. In the Stalinist Czechoslovakia of which Kundera was writing, “shit” meant secret police, political prisoners, few choices, shortages, stupid jobs, pollution; “kitsch” meant red flags flying, patriotic songs and icons of Lenin, hymns to industry and progress. In market-capitalist societies “shit” means violence, apolitical prisoners, meaningless choices, poverty, stupid jobs, pollution; “kitsch” means shopping malls, sitcoms, blockbuster comic-book movies, advertising, electoral pseudopolitics. In either case, kitsch—formulaic, sentimental, one-dimensional, cosily reassuring even at its sexiest or most brutal—serves to conceal shit, which is why it is one-dimensional.

Besides the usual late-capitalist shit, white kitsch in the United States is also, as noted earlier, a denial of original crime—genocide and slavery—and of the fact that, as Harold Cruse put it in “The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,” “the white Protestant Anglo-Saxon in America has nothing in his native American tradition that is aesthetically and culturally original, except that which derives from the Negro presence.” White (not European) American accumulationist culture is defined by its utter blandness and avoidance of controversy or risk, by its cleanliness-as-absence.

This blandest-common-denominator

culture is, notoriously, the behavioral and stylistic norm of the suburb, to which even the older, run-down exurban developments aspire. It is, besides, the ambience of the modern corporate office, where niceness rules—or rather, is the means of rule. In the white-collar workplace everyone must act *white*: quiet, polite, cheerful, emotionally masked, sensually numb, perpetually busy, willing to tolerate any humiliation as long as its done with a smile. Controversial topics are rigidly avoided, and the ultimate taboo is discussing salaries. The excremental significance of money is apparent from the fact that good corporate citizens would rather tell you how much they get laid than how much they get paid.

The truth of wealth, however, is made historically manifest in the proletariat, the class of shitworkers. These are the people who are supposedly only fit for what the sociology texts call supervised routine tasks, which means numbingly dull, frequently health-damaging drudgery—not only in the factory but at the keyboard and behind the counter. Their energy is made available for work only by fierce economic compulsion backed up by a never-ending bombardment of ideology, beginning in schools whose function is to convince them they are incapable of anything else. You ain't shit, the American insult goes, meaning you are the lowest of the low. Eat shit and like it. Shit is processed or disposed of by inferiors who are contaminated by it, who metaphorically eat it, and who metonymically (by association) become it.

No surprise, then, that black people have always been at or near the bottom of the proletarian heap in the US. Occupying at best the next level up—or in many places the same level—are Indians, Mexicans, Central Americans, and Puerto Ricans, also in the racist mind shit-colored. Just above them are the poor white trash, another entropy-word. All are to this day routinely represented as dishonest, loud-mouthed, lazy, lustful, stupid, booze-and-drugsodden brutes. The psychic consequences of this projection onto working-class people, and especially onto women and African-Americans, are devastating. Yet these despised creatures have been a prime source of capitalist wealth.

This wealth is not only economic but cultural. To give only the most familiar example: black people, working from

the African traditions they were able to retain, created the country's most important—some might say only—indigenous musical forms.

Recycling In Mass Culture: The Case of Black Music

There is no need to rehash the vast and continuing expropriation of African-American music to the profit of (mostly) white-owned capital and for the entertainment of white audiences. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of U.S. music history can cite examples, from the bleaching of Ellington's and Basie's orchestral jazz into bland Glenn Miller-style big-band pop in the '30s and '40s to the endless recycling by white guitarists of blues riffs lifted from Robert Johnson or B.B. King. White baby-boomers howl with outrage when the rock anthems of their adolescence are converted into commercials; but this is much the same experience that black musicians and audiences have been having for nearly a century. (Michael Jackson represents the paroxysm of this process: an African-American who tries to eradicate from his face and body the traces of race while producing a color-blind dance music ingeniously constructed out of all the hot pop trends of the moment—and then recycling it almost immediately into adjingles.)

Viewed from a cultural-thermodynamic perspective, this expropriation appears if anything even more horrific. We see a dominant culture and political economy that imported Africans as slaves, worked them to death, bred them like animals, tortured them in every conceivable way for two centuries. Then for another century and a half this culture and political economy systematically exploited the descendants of the slaves as the lowest shitworkers, denying them economic opportunity and political rights wherever possible, meanwhile projecting onto them its own repressed fears and furies, loathings and longings. At the same time, this social order extracted from African-Americans the brilliant music and language they created as a way of surviving their misery. It is as if the Nazis had, while gassing the Jews and extracting their gold teeth, sold off the artwork they had created in the camps, and marketed recordings of the string quartets they had formed there to entertain the guards.

But how did African-American culture become—at least in watered-down forms—not merely acceptable to U.S.

commercial mass culture but central to it, its semi-occult driving force? As I have tried to show, the accumulationist personality structure is profoundly hostile to "Blackness" as white people read into/project onto it—shamelessly sensual and hedonistic, incipiently violent and uncontrollable. It is also hostile to the culture black people have themselves experienced and created. This culture is a far more complex amalgam of traits, one that varies widely by class, caste, and region and that includes distinct patterns of emotional revelation and concealment, anger and tenderness, community and individuality, reason and intuition. One major factor underlying its common differences from Euro-American cultures may be the preservation of African cultural traits, in particular the communal and ecstatic character of West African religion. But black culture is not simply—or even at this point primarily—transplanted African-ness. As Stanley Crouch has controversially pointed out, it is, like U.S. culture in its entirety, a mulatto phenomenon.⁴

Black culture has been created under the pressure of African-American people's situation within the U.S.—within *whiteness*. Under this pressure, exerted at first through slavery and later through institutions such as schooling, African-Americans have continually transformed what they have been able to preserve of their own heritage: for example, shifting African linguistic forms into English to create black vernacular. At the same time they have absorbed influences and materials not only from Euro-America but from Native people and from Mexico and the Caribbean, producing one of the richest and most complex cultures in the world. The pressure has also taken commercial form, the more so as institutional racism has become subtler in its strategies. Countless black musicians, dancers, actors, and even writers have had to flavor their work to white tastes in order to survive, often concealing subversive content through a "signifying" process.

A complex and revealing example is the various uses made of the myth of "Staggerlee," the footloose, fearless, defiantly individualistic black man who hustles his way through life, loving women, siring children, and dealing ruthlessly with his enemies—including, in later variants, the white sheriff. This figure, of course, is the ultimate racist nightmare and justification, the specter looming over a thousand lynchings and

behind the phobic prose of contemporary conservative and neoliberal pundits. Yet the image is also vitally important to African-American tradition—and has been attractive to a minority of whites. Numerous versions of the Staggerlee tale appeared in blues of the '20s. Muddy Water's classic urban blues "Rolling Stone" represented a less violent version of this character, inspiring not only the name of one of the most famous bands in rock history and that of the pioneer counterculture-corporate fusion magazine, but also numerous lesser rock songs of the '50s and '60s, of which "The Wanderer" is as good an example as any. Greil Marcus points out in *Mystery Train* that Staggerlee-Rolling Stone appeals positively to whites as well as blacks because he is a crudely antithetical but powerful image of freedom both for adolescent boys and for shitworking, shit-eating men of any color. The popularity of ultraviolent, misogynistic "gangsta" rap among white suburban teenage boys probably stems from analogous causes, including the excruciating boredom of their milieu and the dismal future most face as adults.

Breaking Loose vs. Hanging Tight

Such sensational use of negatively signed images of black life merely tips an iceberg. Blackness, in the dual sense in which I have employed the term, has been appropriated more broadly by the culture industry. In my view this is owing to a profound and deepening contradiction in capitalist culture and economy since the '20s. In order to expand after World War I, U.S. business needed new mass markets for consumer goods. To create these markets within the U.S. it had to stimulate in huge masses of people what John Maynard Keynes, the great economic strategist of mid-century capitalism, called the "propensity to consume." The most immediate aim was to sell the consumer durables that could now be turned out cheaply *en masse* using the assembly-line methods developed by Henry Ford. This strategy, known to many analysts as Fordism, aimed at a car in every garage and a refrigerator in every kitchen, bought with the wages earned producing the cars and refrigerators.

At first, Fordist consumerism could be consistent with the accumulationist social personality (as it still is to some extent). Every worker could assume the trappings of Property, hallmark of vir-

tue. As Stewart and Mary Ewen have shown, advertising between the wars (and well into the '50s for some products) played on the insecurities in this social personality: anxiety about dirt and pollution, work ethic, desire to emulate the next income level up, need to conform. Ford cars (always black) were initially sold as a more efficient form of transportation, refrigerators (always white) as promoters of hygiene and order.

But already another set of buttons was being pushed. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, published in 1937, George Orwell noted how English working-class youth were opting for colorful, stylish, if shoddily made clothing rather than the somber but durable uniforms worn by their elders. Though they wore out quickly, such glad rags were cheap enough that new and fashionable ones could be bought easily. Like their U.S. counterparts, these young people liked to dance, mostly to jazz and big-band swing, and their dancing was becoming increasingly wild. They went to the movies and did their best to imitate the images of glamor and romance they saw there.

The new consumption and leisure habits growing among late Depression-era young people foreshadowed the direction merchandising was to take after World War II. The sober accumulationist consumerism of the previous generation was no longer enough to absorb the vast output of increasingly automated mass production, which had learned unprecedented efficiency while making weapons. To achieve the necessary speed of turnover, consumer goods generally had to become matters of fashion, as they had always been for the aristocracy and the upper reaches of the bourgeoisie. By the late '50s, this meant the application of planned obsolescence, previously confined to items like nylons, light bulbs, and razor blades, to durable goods like automobiles and vacuum cleaners. At the level of advertising, it meant that *desire* of all sorts had to be stimulated. Accumulationist repression was loosened, and the exploitation of hedonist impulses, begun cautiously in certain market sectors before the war, accelerated.

This hedonist ascendance can be viewed as a partial reappropriation of shadow characteristics banished from the white accumulationist social personality—more open sexuality and sensuality, orientation toward immediate rather than deferred gratification,

"flaunting" rather than reticence in personal style, propensity to spend and consume rather than save and acquire. But such tendencies were in sharp contradiction to the accumulationist values that still dominated political, religious, and civic discourse as well as much advertising.

The collision between accumulationist and hedonist messages helps to explain the sheer weirdness of later '50s mass culture: the heavy, finned cars like space fortresses in pastel colors; the demurely sexy TV moms mopping the kitchen floor in tight sweaters and high heels; and of course Elvis on the *Ed Sullivan Show* with his gyrating hips blacked out. Another indicator of the change was the literally Biblical circulation enjoyed by Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*, which advocated accommodation to the child's own physiological and developmental rhythms in toilet training rather than the rigid timetabling practiced by previous generations.

A large minority of the generation of whites that grew up in consumerist (relative) abundance partly absorbed the hedonist messages but by and large rejected the accumulationist ones. That is, they synthesized from pleasure-oriented advertising and the "imaginary" of rock'n'roll a notion of freedom that implied the absence of hierarchical accountability (say, to a parent or a boss) or customary commitment (say, to a spouse). Perhaps even more important, they absorbed images of satisfaction that focused on abandonment to experience rather than acquisition of goods, on the present rather than the future. To paraphrase the old ad-man's saying, they wanted the sizzle without buying the steak. In the context of the times, this hedonist gestalt fused temporarily with social idealism and a will to experimentation in daily life to help create what Theodore Roszak called the counter-culture.

Alongside the ascending curve of hedonism rose another, in complex relation to it. Ever since the Jazz Age, the appropriation of African-American music and style into U.S. mass culture had been on the increase. This appropriation, to be sure, was mediated by the culture industry, which bleached it for Euro-American tastes. However, significant minorities of whites always managed to gain access to the real thing. In this way they served unwittingly as feeders of new trends to the industry, rather as Bohemian types open up marginal neighborhoods to gentrifica-



"I LOVE THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS. . ."

tion. They also consistently projected their own hedonist values onto black culture, in a partial inversion of the psychic shit-dumping practiced by the majority. The '20s Bohemians who flocked to Harlem saw jazz as exotic, wild, primitive, an image of the escape they sought from white bourgeois mores. In the '50s, the Beats who congregated around bebop musicians admired the spontaneity in their improvisations, but often failed to recognize the mastery of an entire musical language developed over generations that made the spontaneity possible.

At about the same time, working-class Southern whites like Elvis were blending with white country music the jump blues they heard in black juke joints—while still talking about "niggers." As Greil Marcus puts it, "Even if Elvis' South was filled with Puritans, it was also filled with hedonists, and the same people were both." Rock'n'roll was born. Black-derived music (and music by actual black performers) was providing the soundtrack for hedonist marketing strategies; and the soundtrack itself was becoming a hugely lucrative commodity in its own right.

The new energy of post-World War II black popular music, though, was in part political, or at any rate prepolitical. Even as rhythm and blues evolved in complex feedback loops between Memphis, New Orleans, and Chicago, the ground was being laid for the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott of 1955 and the decade-long explosion that followed. This explosion, the Civil Rights movement, was the other force that

created the counter-culture. To some extent the transmission was direct, via the white student veterans of the Southern voter registration campaigns. For many more young middle-class whites, it came via the televised images of thousands of black people standing up to clubs, dogs, firehoses, bullets, and firebombs and refusing to back down. These images, contradicting everything they had been taught, not only filled them with anger and a desire for social justice, but offered them, however vaguely, a model of revolt, of *another way to be*. Even where this revolt took off in quietist (Orientalizing-meditative) or self-destructive (drug-abusing) directions, it was given much of its initial kick by African-American rebellion—anticipated and transmitted in the mulatto music of rock'n'roll.⁵

From the early rock'n'roll period through about 1970, the two curves, hedonism and black influence, moved intermittently close together, exchanging energy via figures such as Chuck Berry, Elvis, and later Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone. Yet despite its partial rejection of white accumulationist values and behavior—and much superficial admiration for "spades"—the counter-culture remained overwhelmingly Euro-American. Its music, while still blues-based, was leagues away in feeling from the black pop of the period, typified by Motown, which smoothed out Gospel into sweet, danceable crossover tunes. Sly and the Family Stone were virtually alone in synthesizing the two strains of cultural energy, in a string of hits that carried the band to Wood-

stock in 1969.

Then, in 1971-3, fueled by the last surge of Black Power and the politicizing of the white counter-culture via the anti-war movement, black musicians briefly took over the pop airwaves with exciting, challenging, politically potent songs: Edwin Starr's "War," Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," War's "The World Is A Ghetto," to name a few. Among these songs was the Temptation's grim, eerie "Papa Was A Rollin' Stone," which brilliantly critiqued the Staggerlee myth even as it acknowledged the myth's basis in reality. In the song, a black mother gathers her chil-

sabotage, absenteeism, and wildcat strikes spread through the U.S. economy. These waves were initiated especially by black workers, who had formed their own semilegal shop-floor organizations to resist the racism of both their supervisors and their unions and the superexploitation to which they were often consigned. They were increasingly joined in their rebellion by newly urbanized "white trash" workers, as well as by urban working-class freaks who had drifted back into the factories. Hedonist mass culture and its countercultural offshoots had combined with African-American revolt and the weakening of

Hedged in by new legislation and hostile courts and bureaucracies, strikes were made virtually illegal. The centers of industrial power that Fordism had created were scattered one after another, as the Smokestack Belt became the Rust Belt. Second-wave feminism, which had started out with radical criticisms of the ruling order, had already been sidetracked into opportunity ideology for professional-class women on the one hand, and "cultural feminist" separatism on the other. Now the brief surge of woman-oriented office-worker organizing that began in the late '70s was halted. A ferocious assault on "entitlements" and social programs was launched. Real wages fell, even as housing prices soared. The shift of capital from industrial investment to frenzied speculation began. Capital's bipolar shit-machine went into high gear, spewing money and obedience out of one end and every sort of entropic foulness and horror out of the other.

Cultural control was also being re-established. A version of the accumulationist social personality was set up as the norm by closing the loop between accumulation and pleasure, by making the process of accumulation the supreme pleasure. Like the miswired psychopath in *The Terminal Man*, who gets an orgasmic rush from the implant in his brain whenever he murders, the looter-heroes of '80s casino capitalism shuddered with ecstasy as they made killings on the market. Most white proletarians, their solidary links with fellow-workers weakened, terrorized by the prospect of homelessness, fell easy prey to vertical identification with the rich and with the nation-state. The Reagans presided over this *Schneissfest* as the wish-dream of the ageing white suburban middle class — old but looking good, rich but relaxed, stylish but virtuous.

The Global Dump

The new phase of capital accumulation that began around 1979 is characterized, as theorists like David Harvey have noted, by its great flexibility and unprecedented global reach. These are made possible by the new power and cheapness of computers and by the speed of worldwide telecommunications, as well as by the breaking of working-class power in the developed countries. Capital, in the form of money, materials, and product specifications, can be switched around the planet so fast that no existing worker strategies or organizations can keep pace. As

The history of black people in the U.S. also teaches Euro-Americans that their whiteness is not an "ethnicity" but a dominance category and a denial mechanism; in other words, that it is empty of everything but power and forgetting.

dren at the grave of their absent father, and they want to know more about him. "When he died, all he left us was alone," she replies. At a cultural node where white notions of "Blackness" and white men's escape fantasies fed on actual black experience and black men's fantasies about themselves, the Temptations were cutting one pipeline while pouring truth down another. Hitherto, the culture industry's selective appropriation of black culture had mostly been limited to those features that could be fitted, however incompletely, into the hedonist gestalt. The cultural-political surge of the early '70s both allowed black artists to speak and perform more freely and opened a channel wide enough that their newly undiluted music directly touched more whites than ever before.

This breaching of the cultural firewalls was preceded and accompanied by a massive breakdown of work discipline. The postwar boom was the first (and only) period in which capital had tried to manage labor under conditions of generalized abundance, in which the spur of destitution was softened by near-full employment and by social welfare programs. The experiment failed. From about 1967 on, the colorful revolt of the counter-culture, Black Power, and the mass movement against the Vietnam War both concealed and helped propagate a revolt on the job. Beginning mainly in the auto industry, waves of

economic compulsion to make more and more social and cultural energy literally unavailable for work. Fordism was shattered.

The early-to-mid-'70s, in fact, marked a point of real danger for capitalism in the developed countries. But crises are the other thing capitalism has always been good at recycling. The threatening entropic energy of the oil shock and the Third World debt crisis in 1974-6 was turned, with the aid of computers and telecommunications, into a global reorganization of the system. The oil-price recession of 1974 began the process of restoring work discipline, especially through the hysterical atmosphere of scarcity created by the mass media and by such measures as gasoline rationing. Meanwhile, U.S.-based multinationals intensified their export of capital — and of what had been high-wage manufacturing jobs — to the Asian Pacific Rim and Latin America. Still, inflation, bane of the accumulationist mindset, continued to eat away at U.S. capital assets until the Federal Reserve raised interest rates in 1979, causing unemployment to soar as several jolts of recession shot through the economy.

The result was that millions of workers, especially black ones, were tossed out of the factories while the remainder were bullied into line, their already sclerotic and corrupt unions broken.

Harvey puts it in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, "The same shirt designs can be produced by large-scale factories in India, cooperative production in the 'Third Italy,' sweatshops in New York and London, or family labor systems in Hong Kong."

Capital's new freedom of action generates unprecedented amounts of social and ecological entropy. Developing countries have not been able to afford much in the way of environmental or worker protection, because their industries have lacked the economies of scale and technologically based productivity that would allow them to compete successfully with transnational corporations even in their own markets. Now, desperate for investment, they are permitting the transnationals to draw on their pools of underemployed cheap labor while benefiting from the lower operating costs imposed by their largely unregulated economies. The result is the pollution and hopeless overcrowding of places like Mexico City or Sao Paulo on one side, and the deforestation of Southeast Asia or the Amazon Basin on the other.

Both the sale of toxic or hazardous commodities and the disposal of wastes are often referred to as *dumping*—in the U.S., also a slang term for shitting. Dumping is a central process of post-Fordist capital: The developed countries' relationship to the periphery (including their own "underdeveloping" regions and populations) is not merely exploitative and extractive, but *excretive*. Peripheral countries are used for particularly hazardous kinds of production, like the pesticides Union Carbide was making at Bhopal. Also, they are sold "discount" merchandise no longer saleable in the countries of its manufacture because of toxicity or other hazards; and

they are bribed to become disposal sites for toxic waste. More subtly but just as devastatingly, they have been victims of the economic entropy dumped on them by a global system convulsing itself in the effort to boost profit rates and locate capital for investment—as artificially depressed prices for raw materials, as mountains of debt, and finally as IMF-imposed "austerity" plans. This translates to the dumping of millions of former peasants into the shanty-towns that ring Third World cities.

Each of these excretive processes has its analogy in poor African-American and Latino neighborhoods. Not only are toxic-waste sites and polluting factories concentrated in or near them, but the misery and poor education of many of their residents is being exploited by drug merchants legal and illegal, who are dumping their merchandise—principally tobacco, alcohol, and cocaine—there as middle-class suburban markets soften. Meanwhile, with the exception of the "Great Society" period under Lyndon Johnson, these neighborhoods have been systematically starved of resources—as Federal housing-loan policies virtually bribed whites to abandon the inner cities while deliberately preventing blacks from doing so, as industry followed the whites into the suburbs over the next twenty years, as financial institutions redlined the neighborhoods into slums, and as social programs and public education have been sliced to ribbons over the last decade. Finally, it is much of the black and Latino working class itself that has been dumped, flushed down the toilet, as its unreliable work-energy has been expelled from the wage system. Now these workers are recycled as low-octane fuel in the sweatshops that bring one final excremental insult to the inner

W.E.B. Dubois on sax . . .

graphic by Adam Cornford



cities—shit jobs.

All this, following on other adaptations forced by the history of slavery and then by the constant brutal pressures of poverty and discrimination that followed, has allowed white projections a limited basis in reality—the materialized ill-wish I spoke of earlier. To grasp this idea, suppose a woman's face has after repeated beatings healed with a bent nose, accretions of scar tissue, and broken veins. Suppose also that understandably, her habitual expression is one of bitterness and anger. Then suppose that the woman is forced by her abuser to wear a translucent mask that grotesquely exaggerates every result of her injuries to create a laughable and frightening caricature, obliterating the beauty and strength that persist under the scars.

One example of this caricatured

TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1991



TWISTED IMAGE by Ace Backwords ©1991



semi-reality is black extended family networks, in which children have been somewhat more likely than their white counterparts to be raised by a relative other than their biological parents, and in which fathers have (supposedly) been more often absent. This difference is routinely inflated by racist demagogues, starting with the liberal Daniel Patrick Moynihan, into the irresponsible, licentious "pathology" of the black family, responsible for most ills of the "underclass." Yet as similar sorts of prolonged economic dislocation, insecurity, and hopelessness hit white working-class people, their family structures and child-rearing practices have begun to alter in the same ways. (There are certainly more white deadbeat dads than black ones.) What's more, the "pathologist" commentators make little mention of the evident familial loyalty and devotion of black alternative childrearsers like aunts and grandmothers.⁶

Another example is the higher per capita rates of crime by black people, asserted by these same apologists to be part of the "underclass pathology"; a more reasonable explanation is the decrepit public education in the inner cities and the catastrophic levels of unemployment faced by young black men. (At the height of the Civil Rights movement in the early to mid-1960s, in a surge of hope and social solidarity, crime fell by as much as half in many black communities.)

Both the fatherless or matriarchal black family and black criminality have been the raw material for countless movies and TV shows during the last twenty-five years, in what Ishmael Reed aptly calls "black pathology entertainment." This is how poverty-entropy and crime-entropy are recycled by capital as social and ideological terrorism. The

revived "Staggerlee" image of the ruthless, sociopathic black criminal, most recently personified in Willie Horton, has proved a reliable way to drill white working people into alliance with their exploiters and to suppress the possibility of a cross-racial class alliance. Audience-participation "verite" cop shows like *America's Most Wanted*, whose viewers work as snitches to turn in alleged criminals, promote vertical identification with the State and the police. The LAPD trial, depending as it did on a negrophobic and authoritarian reading of the Rodney King tape, can be seen as an extension of these shows into the courtroom. In the stop-motion ritualistic dance video the prosecution made of the tape, violence was slowed down until the viciousness of the cops faded and was replaced by the threat conjured from King's every movement.

Conclusion: Fucking Shit Up

Where a margin of profit or political gain is foreseeable, capitalism tries to reabsorb or recycle energy that has become unavailable for work. The waste recycling and pollution cleanup industries are the most obvious examples, but the ways deviant subcultures are "recycled" into commercial fashion are probably more economically important. When recycling does not seem desirable, capitalism does its best to make the energy unusable for any alternate system or order—that is, an order outside the circuits of corporate power and money value. This tendency is visible in a thousand petty and gross acts of waste, from tearing the covers off unsold books to destroying "surplus" agricultural commodities that could feed tens of thousands of hungry people.

The single most dangerous form of entropy for capitalism is large-scale

organized revolt, typically provoked by (and provoking) economic and political crisis. But even this energy can be harnessed, if its own internal organization and scale does not carry it beyond the terms of capitalist social relationships. The long and bitter struggle of nineteenth-century wage-slaves to shorten the working day proved a huge spur to mechanization, which in turn made possible the opening up of vast new markets and, arguably, the survival of the system for another century. Likewise, the containment of the industrial revolts of the '30s within the CIO unionization drive facilitated the shop-floor discipline needed to produce for World War II and the Fordist deal that came after, in which intensified work and longer hours were traded for wage increases.

The case of the black rebellion of the 60s and 70s is more complex. To some extent, the U.S. capitalist class has been able to channel the rebellion's energy into a spectacle of "equal opportunity" and tolerance built on the civil rights legislation passed between 1959 and 1975, with additional use being made of a suitably edited icon of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But this spectacle masks a vicious if politically useful division of the African-American population into "middle-class" workers on the one hand and "ghetto" poor on the other, most of whom are still working for wages, but much lower ones. Also, of course, money is being made off the resurgence of Black Nationalist ideology among rap groups like Public Enemy. But by and large it is the second tendency that has been followed: to make surplus African-American proletarians unavailable for any other order by allotting them social conditions so intolerable that they collectively self-

deconstruct through addiction, alcoholism, psychosis, hypertension, internecine violence, and imprisonment. Both the success and the limits of this strategy can be seen in the L.A. uprising.

As various black radicals have long pointed out, the system's treatment of black people is the extreme case—and testing ground—of what it is doing to all of us, and has been doing to all working-class people for generations. Conversely, African-Americans provide countless brilliant examples of how people can recycle the shit dumped on them into an alternate order for themselves, as speech, as art, and as strategy. African America's unabsorbed, vivid, rich, poor, damaged, surviving presence is a constant reminder that capitalism depends for its daily perpetuation on brutalizing people in every conceivable way—and that this brutalization can be resisted. Capitalism's central brutality consists in forcing people to choose between giving up most of their lives to mind-numbing, body-destroying toil or scrabbling for scraps like rats in a garbage heap. This choice is what the LAPD and all its kindred

bodies exist to enforce, and this choice is what we must collectively refuse.

How can we refuse it? The history of black people in the U.S. also teaches Euro-Americans that their whiteness is not an "ethnicity" but a dominance category and a denial mechanism; in other words, that it is empty of everything but power and forgetting. This forgetting really only benefits the few at the top of the social pyramid, and must be reproduced by a constant blizzard of "white noise" in the mass media, as well as by every mechanism of geographical, educational, and economic segregation the system can bring to bear. Whenever whiteness starts to break down, as it did during the "Sixties," danger looms for the system, because new forms of order, involving the refusal of work and the direct assertion of collective need, tend to appear. The young "whites" in their reversed baseball caps and baggy shorts who ran furiously through the streets after the LAPD verdict was announced, who cheerfully looted supermarkets alongside their black and Latino neighbors, had for the time being ceased to be white. To me they are a source of pride

and hope, an emblem of the fruitful disorder to come.

—Adam Cornford

Footnotes to Shit

1. See Marlon Riggs' excellent documentary *Ethnic Notions* for a powerful introduction to the stereotypes.

2. The biosphere can be viewed as a vast web of recycling loops, centered on plants' recycling of atmospheric carbon dioxide through photosynthesis. The chief form in which entropy is dumped from the biosphere is heat radiated into outer space.

3. Only thirty years ago, as Micaela DiLeonardo points out, pundits and sociologists were describing working-class Italian-Americans in almost identical terms to those in which they describe working-class African-Americans today.

4. This may appear to contradict what I said earlier about white accumulationist culture; actually it confirms it. All over the Americas, light skinned elites that can pass for "pure" European are hysterical in their desire to separate themselves in every way from Blackness; their negative self-definition as *un-black* is part of the mulatto experience—as is, sadly, the Black middle-class desire to assimilate.

5. Check out, for example, Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business."

6. The "Murphy Brown" affair is instructive. Hysterical conservatives like Dan Quayle view the tendency to single-parent families and deadbeat absentee fathers as an infection bubbling up from the Black underclass sewage. Some liberal and even "feminist" commentators, on the other hand, distinguish "responsible" white upper-middle-class single parents like the fictional Murphy Brown from irresponsible, pathological underclass ones, breeding at the taxpayer's expense. Evidently parenting is to be another right, like most rights in the U.S., that only money can buy.



Bud Powell's spirit laughing at the Big Stick, Birmingham AL 1963.

THRIFTERS: Second-Hand Shit

We take shelter in the glory of our rage because sometimes the remedy is worse than the disease.

I have no excuse to be here, but I hold the camera that, for me, brings it back to me.

In the dark now, sweepers pick up their last piles, toss them shovel over arm into black plastic trash bags and leave, yawning.

I snap sporadic candids. A faint throb where pulses meet. . .

I did have a foreboding a few months ago. Once, at a co-op health food store, two women pulled each other's hair in my peripheral view. I found them arguing over a used plastic bag fallen at our feet. Each claimed she had carried it from home for the ten-cents-a-bag discount for reusing plastic.

"I've reused mine nine times." "I shop here every week—they know me and my bags." "Oh yeah? Prove it!"

Today brought up deeper impressions cutting to the heart of reason. As a photographer, I am caught in that world where conflict is focusable.

Still, I'll plead extenuating circumstance.

At first, three were there besides me. I found the garage sale by mistake, having exited one street too soon in search of a friend's new apartment. I noticed a long wall of draped t-shirts in various colors. As I parked to the wall's far right side, I spotted a shirt I had been looking for since the shoot in the park last summer, a free concert in celebration of Black History Month. I decided to check out the price and possibly find a tacky but nostalgic gift as a house-warming treat.

The t-shirt was black. Pitch black. Like tar. The only design was on the front: a red star circling red lettering that read: "Rock Against Racism."

I wandered the wall before asking for

the one I wanted. There was a table beneath it with baskets of cosmetic jewelry, moldy hardback how-to books, and boxes of old board games: Monopoly, Shoots & Ladders, Life. I glanced at my watch and cut the browsing. Again, I was running late. Locating the t-shirt, I asked to pull it down and pinched its bottom hem as I pointed to it. From behind my right shoulder, a woman pushed ME down and back, her hand snagging the shirt from its hook.

I began to wonder if there was a sign on my back that read "Tell me your favorite consumer story today!"

"That's mine!" she insisted. She was in a brown polyester bus driver's uniform, apparently on a break. "I want that for my nephew. I saw it first."

No problem, I thought, and raised my arms in surrender. I asked the man behind the table if he had another somewhere, but he just shook his head, not in a "no" gesture or a "yes" gesture for that matter, but kind of a yes/no-all-around-the-neck movement. Then he walked away. The woman with the shirt continued her shopping attack on me by walking around in circles, back and forth in front of the table. She began to tell me stories of other shopping adventures and bargains. (Yeah, by pushing

everyone out of your way, I thought.)

Blocked by her hyperactive pace, I loaded my camera:

"The shape, the size, that color," she began in a staccato Spanish accent which made me pay more attention simply because I liked the sound of her words. "It reminded me of one my grandmother kept next to the wicker hamper in her first-floor bathroom. My grandfather tossed loose change into it while cleaning out his pants pockets after long days at the deli. I *had* to have it! I found it at a garage sale down the block from my house where almost weekly a tie-dyed couple sets up for sale. I noticed it as they were filing in folded chairs and card tables, boxes of books, t-shirts and china dolls. My little find rested on top of a box of bleached sheets. I was so excited I pointed at it and screamed.

"How much, huh? How much ya want for that there?"

Her voice became more charismatic as her body narrated along. Her passion gave her syllables more stress. She stretched out her arm, forefinger pointing like the conductor of some psychedelic orchestra. "How much, huh? How much ya want for that there?" I can see her now.

She continued: "I must have frightened them a bit because they jumped and turned around to catch their balance on the bannister. But I was determined, and they could tell."

She had that thrifter's look which made her eyes drift frantically from table to table. It was as though a perfect-purchaser's-wind-up-knob was wound too tightly on the back of her head. Those eyes justified a necessary purchase with some fabricated historical significance. Those eyes were the voyeuristic casualties of shell-shocked consumerism. She was determined, I could tell that much. I sat down on my feet and watched.

"They said they promised one another they wouldn't sell anything past four. What was left over this week they wanted to donate to the Salvation Army. 'You have too much stuff, I said. They have too much stuff. I offered \$15.00 although between you and me, it was only worth 5 or 6. They couldn't refuse. As they wrapped it in paper, they said the only use they got out of it was for burning incense. The layered ash did give it some antique look until I cleaned it and had it appraised.

"It took me a week to decide where to place it. It was too tall for the coffee table.

The beige patio furniture matched its coloring but there was always the chance of rain. It didn't match my kitchen's orange-and-green fruit-basket wallpaper, and my bedroom, which I like bare and uncluttered, was out of the question. No one would see it in there. So, finally, after a week of placing it here, putting it there, even hanging it from a plant hook in the ceiling, I decided a more subtle approach would work. I figured that every guest pees on the average of at least once in a two-hour visit. So, I put it on the back of the toilet when entertaining male friends and to the right of the door if female friends arrive. If the guests are a little of each, I place it according to whom I want to impress." She takes a deep breath, smiles, and curls the t-shirt into her folded arms at her chest.

I couldn't help but ask: "What happens when you're alone?"

"Oh!" she perked up, excited at my interest. "I shift it with my moods. Yes. It's nice that it moves. So, finally after a week of that, I returned to work."

She said this as she walked down the table, glaring up and down, back and forth. I sat back on my ass, put my chin to my knees, and thought about leaving.

"Hey!" I lifted my head and yelled behind her. "What IS IT anyway?" She couldn't hear me. Or didn't want to. She walked on chatting to herself and touching everything in her reach.

Objects piled in her arched arms.

When I looked up, more people had surrounded the table and wall. Various people with various looks touching, feeling, even smelling and turning things around and around, checking it all out at different angles, bartering with the man behind the table whose eyes gradually sunk above the flimsy brown-ing circles beneath them.

I couldn't tell if I was delirious from printing late into the night, or if there was some hidden agenda or theatrical performance about to begin. The set seemed unnatural. Staged. Robotic. Hands and arms reaching. People watching without looking at each other. Hustling. Shoving. Holding their decisions firmly in the closed curve between their biceps and ribs. Their sometimes simple movements grew into militant aggressive actions. I became paranoid, nervous that someone would get hurt, or the silent man behind the table would lose all patience and fall beneath their feet. Almost instinctively, I did what I

often do in crowds: I snapped the camera.

I snapped their hands, their arms, that reaching, their excited eyes. I snapped until I bumped into a tall man in a blue pin-striped suit, with dreadlocks that hung like cigars over his shoulders.

"Excuse me," I stuttered.

"Oh—no problem," his voice answered in a giddy high but a light-hearted change from the noise anxiety I felt.

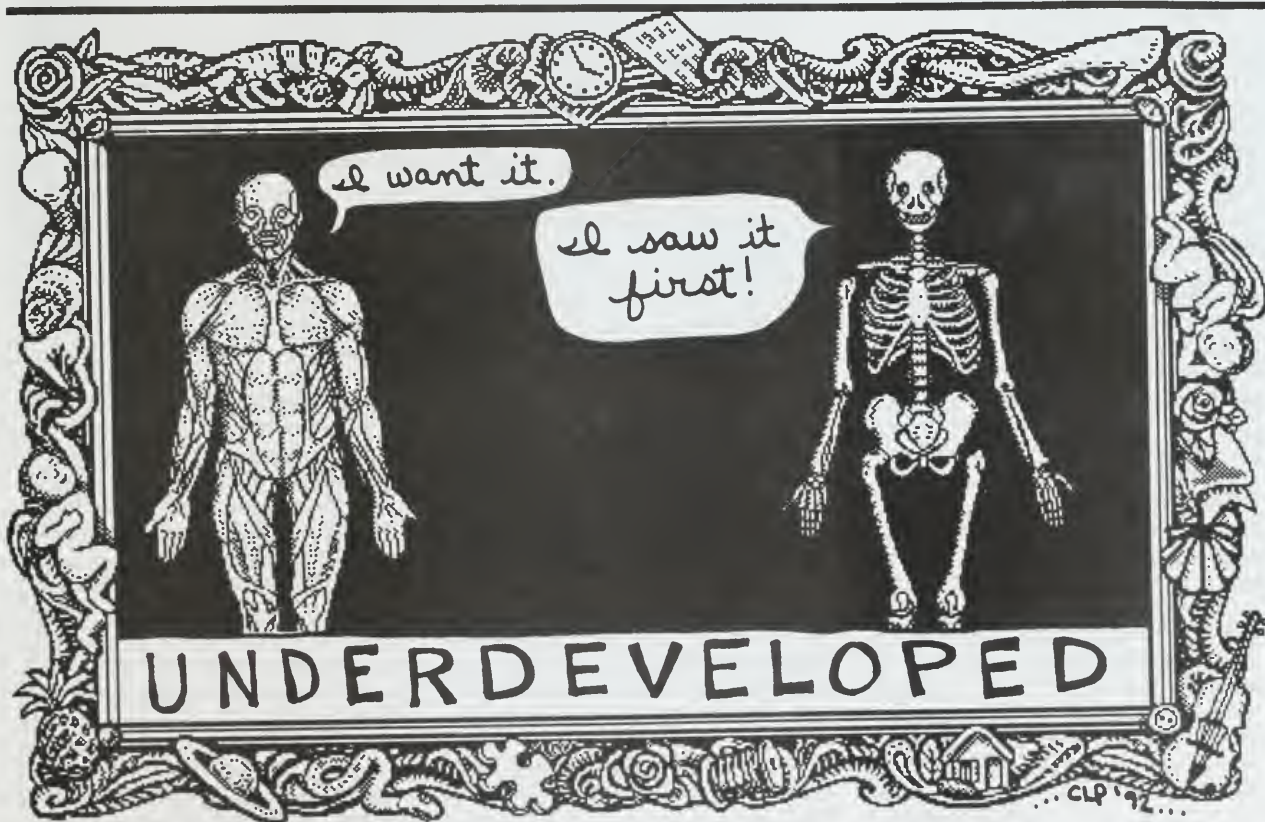
He pointed to a "Share the Earth" t-shirt with lettering sketched to resemble branches and ivy projecting outward toward the shirt's edge that veered slightly to the back. "Isn't this great?" he asked.

"Nice," was all I could get out.

"I think I'll buy it now to give to my niece this Christmas. I always complete my shopping by Thanksgiving. And you?"

Before I could answer, he rolled off into Storyville. I began to wonder if there was a sign on my back that read "Tell me your favorite consumer story today!"

"The first time I picked it up, it was as though no hands ever held it. The next



graphic by Cory Potts

time, all the fingerprints of time had gathered as a small fraction of its composition. I adored it." He became increasingly dramatic. "It seemed like any slight wind could cast the thing to the ground by tipping it sideways over its top-heavy stance. If it's placed properly under light, it stretches a shadow over its bottom half, silhouetting itself on top of itself, an endless spiral echo.

"I bought it for my mom for Christmas a few years back—a holiday, mind you, that encompasses the three things I have the most problem with: religion, consumerism, and sentimentality."

I looked up from cleaning beneath my nails. I heard what he said but couldn't focus on how or why he said it. He kept up. I shook my head.

"So, I figured my mom would really dig this statuette-something-or-another to put on her shelf for some Avon friend to admire. She'll raise that chubby peach hand of hers, brush it across her right cheek, grin (but not too much), giggle (but not too sweet), and say, 'Yes, my youngest gave that to me. Isn't he thoughtful?' And the Avon-giddy will say, 'What is it?' And mom will give some far-fetched story of me traveling from city to major city with my briefcase full of accounting files, meeting major bank executives for lunch and passing by the city's many souvenir shops, thinking instantly of my mother. Because that's what good sons do... 'Oh,' the friend will reply, casting her oblong eyes to the ground and turning to the expensive fake gold watches and eye-wear made from sand and melted ear wax. (Giggle. Giggle.)

"Yes, yes, yes. I took great pleasure in purchasing that thing. Seeing mom open it. It had the oddest shape I'd ever seen. Nothing near an average geometric shape. I couldn't find a box to fit it in. But why a box, I thought. Why not drape a sheet over it. Let the wind get up underneath to it. It's old. It's used. Let the elements touch it.

"Through the airport, my right hand held up the heavy top half while my left hung on to the bottom lower platform by the top notch of my middle finger as I balanced it to the rhythm of my walk. People gawked at us, the thing and I. They giggled at it and snarled at my shoulders as I tried to fit us comfortably in restaurant booths or through airplane aisles. Having it made me suppress my natural urge to overpack. So I..."

He went on and on until I finally found enough nerve to excuse myself. I

was exhausted. I began to think somebody was playing a trick on me. That a photographer friend finally called Candid Camera out on me as she often threatens to do. That maybe I walked into an afternoon field trip from the nearest psychiatric ward. That... I never even got from him what that THING actually was...

From their arms, everyone's choice of purchase advertised itself through the anxious look in their eyes.

I wobbled around, heading for my car at the other end of the table. Conversations were few, but when they occurred, it was shopping philosophy in grand, elaborate monologue: "I try to always take mother's advice at these times in my life." A green-eyed girl in her teens to a younger, adolescent blue-eyed friend. "If I feel down, hurt, inferior, or afraid, I jump right out and buy myself something pretty. 'Cause I'm worth it."

Something pretty. Something pretty. I kept snapping film, looking for something pretty in the square. Something old. Something new, borrowed, or that "Rock Against Racism" shirt that seduced me here, and to my left, she snooped through a box on her knees. She threw them over her head in haste as though she were being timed. They were variously colored scarfs, leather, elbow-length gloves, elastic belts and hair bows falling, falling from above her head and sliding down the shirt that dangled from her purse in her arm! My initial reaction was to snag it quickly enough so she'd fall back onto her box with its skewer set sticking out from the top. I felt I had failed unless I left there with it. I focused in on the shirt with my lens to not lose her in the crowd and headed forward.

A black-haired arm entered my view. I automatically followed its round, choppy knuckles unbending to point to my own goal, hearing:

"Hey! Hey lady—Do you really want that shirt? I'll pay you and the man for it. What 'cha say, huh? Can I have it?"

"No, definitely not!" She barked. "Go on—get away from me now. You hear?"

"Ah—come on lady. What ya want from that shirt? I'm a musician, man. A black man. A musical black man. Means something to me. Come on—Pleeeeeeze! Please lady, give it up. I've been looking everywhere for one like that for..."

Out of nowhere, she wailed: "Help! Help! This man's trying to rob me! Help!!"

Heads and arms ceased meandering as buyers. Attention now haloed above the confrontation between them and the shirt, and I again failed spontaneity because suddenly my mind went epic.

Thrown from the signal of agitation, my sword broken and confused, my mind told me to snap, my eyes to move back from the bodies who were herding toward them. I wished I had for once been early; or maybe I was, for some strange reason, needed here. Here, in the midst of a Sunday afternoon, our luxury turned over on top of itself like the shadow of the statuette.

As things developed, the man, the woman, the shirt became a loud shaky arena. The longer it continued unresolved, the more spectators participated by cheering, or walking forward into them. Others paid for their things, or dropped them quickly and walked to the grey stones that led to the cars.

"There they go," I heard to my right. "See how we are?"

I turned and she looked at me. I leaned further into the gap between us and acknowledged her with slight smiles.

"How are we?" I asked.

"Bored. And addicted to it. Everyday."

I inhaled and giggled a bit as I often do out of nervousness. Her insight was as poetic and melodramatic as it was objective and shy. I placed my thumb on the film advancer knob and turned.

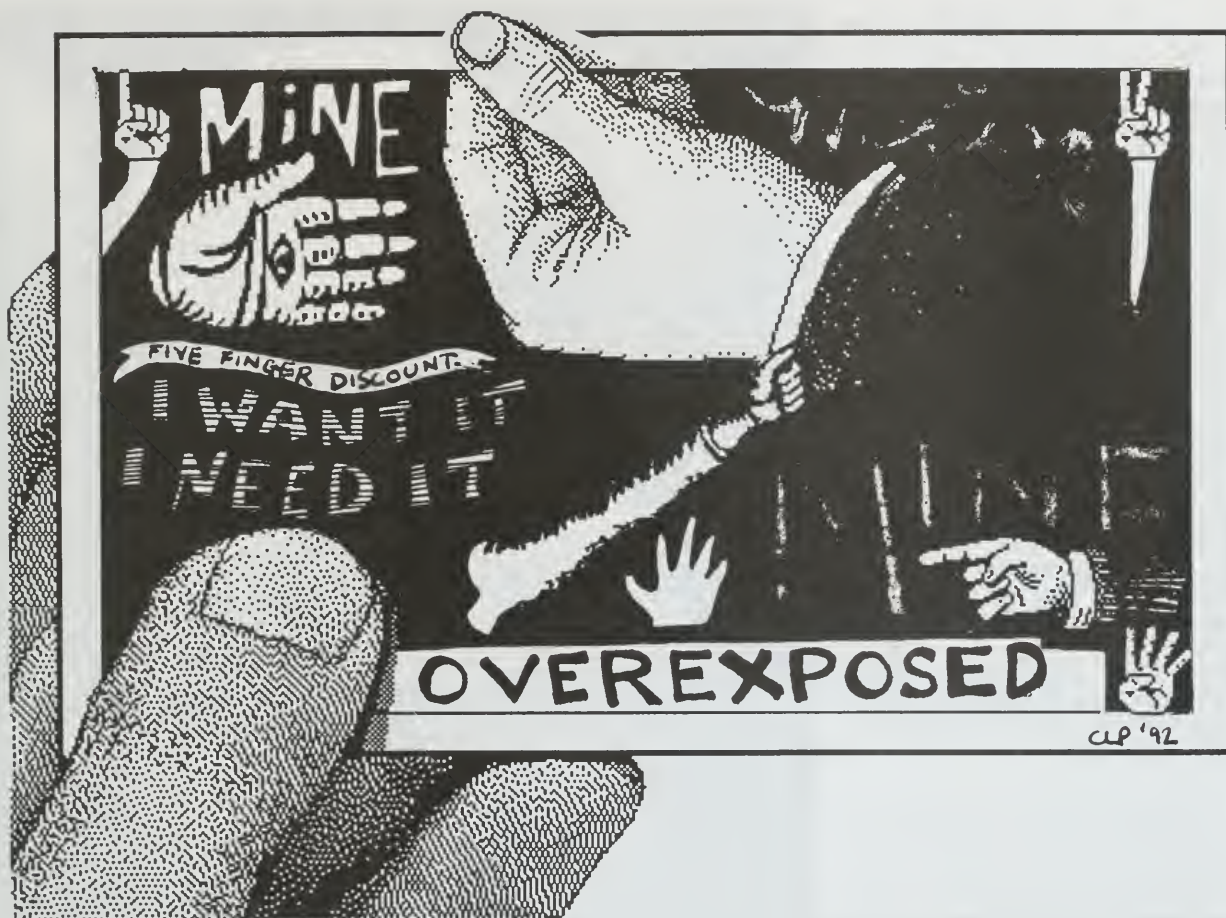
"Bored?" I asked. "Are we really? Seems like too much, don't you think?"

I anticipated a wise and witty response but instead she reached up at me, eye-to-eye momentarily, and turned back again, pointing to new movement in the crowd as she raised her bony body on tip-toe.

"Now what are they doing?" She said more to herself than me. "What's going on? I can't see over."

I looked up and over to fill her in, motivated by the prospect of her observant response. I rattled off moves.

"A teenage boy, maybe fourteen or so, just entered and is pulling at the bottom of the shirt. Looks like he's being held back. Oh. Maybe that's his mother behind him. Wait. Wait. I can't quite see. Everyone's moving forward again. There are three or four surfer-type guys exiting to the right. Oh shit! They're going for the wall. Wow—snagging those shirts while the others are preoccupied. Huh..." I had to laugh. It was becoming an obstacle course of move-



graphic by Cory Potts

ments both predictable and full of suspense. Suddenly, I thought of the man behind the table. Where was he? I couldn't focus in on him anywhere. I clicked my lens to macro and searched around the foreground. The background. I stood on a milk crate and pointed directly into the circle's center. No table man in sight.

"Oh no you don't," came a tiny voice from behind. The table man was running past us now toward the wall looters. "Buy up or leave!" Wow—he talks.

There were too many things going on at once by this time. I didn't know where to look, what to shoot. Like most sports, I didn't know if I should keep my eyes on the ball or the strategy of the defense on the other side. The table man became the ball. He became the object to throw for a possible score.

He jived back and forth from the wall, the table, the people, the circle. His neck shifted back to the street as though in search of help, then to the

ground looking for landing in case he fell. I felt caught in the grass beneath me. Here and there, I pointed my camera. Missing only pom-poms and saddle shoes, Wise Woman clapped at my side, cheering on the jester-like movements of Table-Man.

"Here we go!" she cheered.

"Shouldn't we call someone or something?" I asked, my voice rising with the crowd noise.

"Oh—this happens here every Sunday. The cops will be here in about [she glances at her wrist watch] oh, I'll guess ten minutes. The sweeping crew will follow shortly after them. I hear they get paid overtime for this. This is why I come here. Best Sunday afternoon entertainment I can think of. And you? Don't worry honey—if you don't want to get hurt or involved at all, just don't walk any closer. You're in the safe zone."

If I don't want to get hurt or anything? What the hell? I definitely took a wrong turn somewhere. Everyone was

running in circles except for me and Miss What's-her-name here. I was feeling pressed to get involved, but I couldn't figure out how many sides there were anymore. My maternal instincts rose up. I wanted to find the table man in the crowd, clear away all small children and pregnant women, which seemed to be numerous here, maybe find a phone, dial 911

SUDDENLY . . .

It began as a small flame until the heat of the day and the heat of the spark and the heat of flying language branded MY CAR as bombfire material. I saw that shirt on my way in and parked as closely as possible with my lazy self, and so here, on the verge of a decision, my car, my prints in the back seat, my glove compartment with exposed film from the past two weeks of work, all grew into one wild burgundy-blue decision right before my very eyes: MY CAR! MY FUCKING CAR!

I ran for it. From behind, Wise Woman yelled, "Go get 'em Honey! Break a Leg!" And she was laughin' and hootin' and a'hollerin', cheering on my sudden participation. I felt sick with anger and ran.

As I reached the back bumper, another explosion set off on the front hood, loud enough to scare the people who'd begun to cheer on the fire. They had forgotten their angry ordeals with each other, and now my car in flames provided a unifying spectacle.

I was shaking. Whenever I get this angry, I throw everything from my person. I threw off my camera, my jean jacket, my bracelets and rings. I tossed my earrings into the fire, untied my sweater from around my waist and hurled it over the crowd catching the potpourri of eyes on ME now. Some expressionless, others curious, anticipating my next move.

From the middle, someone yelled: "Take it off, baby!" And then from somewhere else: "Yeah, lady—take it off! Go for it!" They were whistling and staring and clapping in unison.

My hands were clutching the bottom of my shirt, which unconsciously I meant to disrobe. My stomach held heat from the fire. My left hand covered my navel as the right pulled down my shirt. I reddened and warmed with embarrassment. In shock from unexpected attention, I squatted to the ground, limp, when both my arms were taken up by two policemen who not only threw me into their car, but proceeded to shovel the rest of us into other vehicles.

We were held for three hours with no fine. While waiting out the time, I was told that's average for these Sunday charades. It all depends on the officers' moods and the amount of mess left by sunset. Last week, the time was only one hour. My car provided more debris.

Now, the sweepers are jellyfish hitting against the glass of an unkempt aquarium, wrinkling their flabby collarets, fraying the near-ending natural light.

Me? I guess I do have an excuse to be here. I snap sporadic candids until the sun falls down.

Next week I hear there'll be . . .

—Marina Lazzara



photo by M.L.

A LITTLE CRITICISM

When this society finally finishes
the job
and drags me off to the madhouse
I'm not going to fight or even
swear at the officers that take
me in BUT . . .
as soon as I hear those doors
slam behind me I'm not gonna
give those people a rest
If there's any justice in this
country it will be in the marrow
of my bones
and since escape will probably
be impossible
I can at least wrestle with the
goons on the ward
kick the nurse in the shins
throw food on the floor and at people
piss on the walls
scribble obscene words on the lavatory walls
and other such rebel acts
that come to mind
And . . .
the reason why is I would hate
for the state that it had anything
like a human face and were actually
helping me

—Dale W. Russell

IN THE ALIEN WORLD

In the alien world, lamp posts are shaped like needles, eyes bright and the rest still lit but paler. Beings nod in greeting, rarely talk, grow flowers which they cut and give as gifts which then take root automatically. Each house operates its own air supply. Cuts heal of their own accord. For metaphysical cuts, a being leans toward any being's chest and thus is healed. No one reminds anyone of anyone else. Advanced art allows invisible statues, glossed in annuals spiral-bound. I visited once. They put me to work at a train station, sweeping.

—Muriel Karr

EL REY

Where's thick hair on the sidewalk mats 'n greased I,
to the festering buildings clothe my eyes, asleep
in their vacant swarm, where the coffee in the gutters
streams, could I be there and clearly catch a bus?
Or's severing, like the gravel pants I wear so I sit,
but lurch but never sit, just stand under a rain of
dust (where the roofs dissolve, and the windows fill
with chain) Could I sceptre there, with this rod
through my neck, where that whined jaw in the doorway
"talks?"

—John M. Bennett

VIDEO WOLF

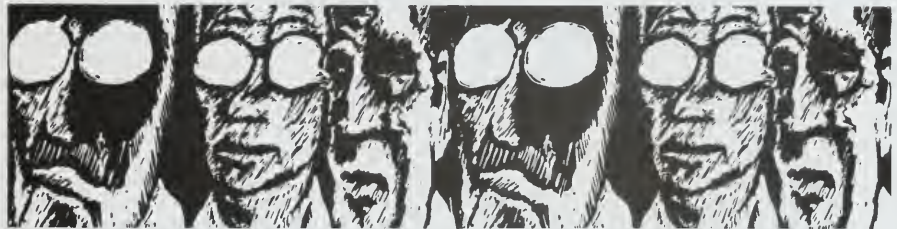
He moved through
the abstract city,
speaking in tunnels of chrome,
his body outlined
by the pressure
of light.

On the street he was preceded
by an empty jacket
filled with wind.
It protected his thinking.
Waking far behind
again, he returned
to the wall of circuits:

The woman in hospital clothes
escapes, killing the janitors.
The cars blow up.
Pock faced men
hit each other harder and harder until
one of them falls
dead. The surgeon emerges
from a successful implant.
The womb now harbors
the perfect child.

In the deep deep oceans, purse-seine nets pull up everything in their boundary.

—Richard Osborn Hood



INFRARED EYES

If at the end of the day
we find ourselves the only Empire
still standing, see

... if our day is followed by record night
dark beyond our design
but our making—yes

. . . if we dream ourselves
avenging angels with forked tongues
civilized—with infrared eyes . . .

—D.S. Black

PEOPLE'S PARK '91

I have thrown myself into battle to forget you;
I carry my fat belly like a purple heart.
I have staggered across the sand to rescue a fallen manikin;
I dodge saliva of policemen who resemble your brother.
I have raised the flag of refuge over the ruins of my castle;
I free prisoners who have neither history nor hope.
I have made the sun rise on a leaflet as the sun set;
I build a camp in the city to house emptiness.
I have sipped icy blood in the shade of television cameras;
I dodge the saliva of policemen who resemble your lover.
I have inquired for the reasons behind lies and other sacred mysteries;
I write you letters just to say hello.
I have thrown myself into battle to remember you;
I carry my fat belly like a purple heart.
I have committed my spirit to the future;
I die and am buried on the same planet you call home.

—Dave Linn



graphic by S. Devaney

PREPPING THE PREPOSITIONS

This is a reminder that
coincident with
the theft of
a computer from
the office where
the desk is where
the special keys for
the special areas of
security, the special keys were also taken.
This is a reminder that
any keys which
you do not keep on
your person should
be kept in
a safe or a locked cabinet that's screwed
securely down.
The top drawers of
an unlocked desk
are the first places that a thief will look.
In view of the above
it is hoped you will remember that within reason.
Sincerely and in confidence
with your cooperation
I feel sure we can
within reason protect
our fund of prepositions.

—Edward Mycuae

REMEMBER THE NAME

(Excerpted from *P.S. for Personal Secretaries*)

When you cannot remember your hand you are perceived
When you cannot remember
When you cannot remember your hand
You identify 12 inches of your physical self
When you answer the telephone professional when
"I'm Sally Jones it's nice to see you again"
It projects competence and your worth as well

—Richard Wool

DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND THE MONEY WILL FOLLOW, IF YOU VISUALIZE A RICH RELATIVE (WHO LIKES YOU) DYING REAL SOON NOW

Let's talk data.
You're dBased. All sorted out. All out of sorts.
More debris from the Information Age
Scattershot rattletrap ricochet all the way home.
The usual *chew on this, buddy*. Very infotaining.
The word "networking" has acquired so many meanings
It now means everything. So give it up, give in to it.
There's twelve steps out there somewhere
That address your particular problem.
As opposed to that dweeb over there,
Who imagines himself an information surfer in mid-dude-ism,
But in a parallel reality he's just a guy with an ulcer for a job,
A flycasting wannabe
With a Sharper Image catalog for an imagination.
Watch the undertow, buddy. Watch the undertow.
We didn't make this world, so we'll have to lie to it.
Is it resume time? We'll let you know.
News is not reported, it is released
Wicked as a spitball. Write a personals ad:
**Desperate seeking insanely desperate. Someone
Who will take me.**
Upload it to the on-line service. She'll buy it.
Why not? She's a consumer.
Dinner, drinks, dancing, and maybe later,
Date-rape.
That's the way business is done. It's a career,
Not your life or anything. Now bend over.
With enough coke it can even seem like pleasure.
But don't forget to count them beans. Keep your receipts.
The city is just a conduit for business.
Plug and play. Plug away. Spelunk your synapses for the next innovation:
Misfire or mismanagement. Rising stars go nova,
Down on the carpet, then out on your ass. Resume time!
Jerk your fingers to the known. You've got connections.
Work them puppies! So there it is:
The state of the art, the art of the state.
All wired up and nothing to know.
We'll get back to you.

—David Fox

WHOLE

you walk down the street
and you see the people
staring at you, faceless
and loud, gaping holes
where the heads are supposed
to be, yawning wide, big
holes, little holes,
hell,
they're covering their entire
bodies. soon it looks like
one big hole, the more the
merrier, the better to
swallow you up with my
dear, and i pause to think
about how we're ingested
then spit out every day
of our lives. i keep
looking for plugs to
stop them up, but all
i seem to find are
tongues, and they are
just a little bit
distorted.

—Scott C. Holstad



graphic by Mari Bianca

OLD WOMAN

You have seen the old woman
seen her crumbling silhouette
between two immense buildings
where there is just enough room
for her and her possessions

and the night that rots
in the morning sky. And you passed
her on another sidewalk
emerging from her abyss behind
the laundromat. She did not follow

but you walked faster. You did not know
or care that she has had the perfect answer
burning in her head for fifty years
and will die still waiting to be asked.
Old woman who hears bees shudder.

Who can hear the teeth in the roses
gnash, forecasting winter. Old woman
who carries heaven in one plain brown
bag and hell in another. Old woman
who raises generations of spiders

in the space between her fingertips.
Old woman who cradles a broken clock.
Old woman who paces outside the room
of her son, the dollmaker (he keeps
pink fingers in a blue jar). Old woman

who comforts her other son, the mathematician
(he has dreamed again of the number one
whipping the number two into infinity).
Old woman who plucks hairs from the nostrils
of a statue. Old woman who tries vainly

to scrub the filth from the bottom
of an idea. Old woman who puffs smoke
from her dead husband's pipe
as she watches the tides rise and fall
in the privacy of an imaginary bathtub.

Old woman who catalogs lace. Old woman
who guides eggs to paradise. Old woman who
cackles in the corridors of history, burned
and reviled—condemned to psychiatry.
To drugs named after dead gods. Old woman

of flesh, of hair, of bone and bone
and bone. Old woman who suffers eruptions
of light from her forehead. Old woman
ground fine by the seasons. Old woman
like powder in the wind, blown into

eternity, unseen, unseen. You have passed
this woman by, but you will come to her.
When your ruptured life spills dust
on the empty page. When the air you breathe
tastes thin and sour as the air

forced into brain dead patients, strapped
to terrible machines. When the mangled fruit
of youth lies fermenting and rotten
on the sidewalks of city after city. Then
you will come to her, and she will float

two beads of oil in a glass of clear
water, and when the two join together you will
know her as your mother, your sister, your
wife, your self, and then and only then
will she kiss and make you better.

—Jack Evans

GOD'S WORK

I'M A SUPERVISOR of a group home for mentally handicapped people. Don't let the supervisor title fool you, I'm just an hourly wage slave with a title. Interspersed with a four year stint at a state college, I've done various work to survive: concrete laborer, dairy plant worker, data entry person, janitor, salesman, stagehand, liquor store clerk. In between I hitchhiked in Europe, living off my savings and the hospitality of people I met along the way. When I returned to America I started my present occupation.

Basically I believe that work is an oppressive rather than uplifting aspect of life, taking time away from more interesting pursuits. The time spent slaving for someone else could best be used to expand your own horizons. If your whole day is filled with mindless repetitious work you are bound to become brain dead in the process. The work done by millions of people in America could be done by thousands, thus freeing people to better society, educate themselves and pursue their own individual interests.

I don't judge my life by my work. I'm not a good soldier. I've participated in sabotage on almost every job. Sabotage can be extreme or it can be as simple as cheating your boss out of time.

Ultimately, for it to be effective it should be done in a way that allows you to keep your job. Any act of sabotage is worthy. Remember, the clean fingered business types are stealing millions and anything you can do to stop them is positive.

As a concrete laborer I was required to do specialized jobs. Sometimes a septic tank or water container was being formed. Each needed openings so that pipes could be run through once the form was poured. On a few occasions I conveniently forgot to place the inserts in the form. Once it was poured and hardened the bosses realized there was no pipe inlet and outlet out of the tanks. I feigned ignorance and received a tongue lashing but the hulking piece of concrete was scrapped. In a dairy plant I stacked bags of sweet whey and then stabbed the bags

just as they were being loaded on a truck. When the truck reached its destination the sweet whey had turned into a congealed mess. Working a cash register creates endless possibilities. The easiest thing to do is have friends buy various items and then charge them for only one item. Or if a customer is looking for an item, inform the customer that the same item can be bought at another store for a cheaper price.

I've continually tried to unionize every work place I've been in because in the workplace there are no rights. The present business unionism practiced by the AFL-CIO is a sellout, but unions still give workers a small chance at equality in the workplace. Every effort on my part to organize has resulted in colossal failure. Usually I'm shown the door or the effort dies because of lack of interest. Many workers are afraid and labor laws make it next to impossible for workers to organize. It is coming to the point where even workers who want to unionize can not.

I tried to organize my present job with SEIU organizers. The process is long and involves inside information gathering and above all the ability to maintain stealth. You must have the ability to choose people who are fed up with their jobs and then use their discontent in productive ways. Occasionally this yields some surprises, as when the most right-wing person supports you and the progressive type ignores you. Our effort had evolved to the point where we had gathered information about the company and employees. We began going door to door and talking to people. The company was in the

dark, but we made a fatal mistake. One day the organizers and I met in a local diner and discussed tactics and new information. Unfortunately, a boss from a similar company was at the next table and overheard everything said. By the time I arrived at work the phone was ringing off the hook and I was asked to make an appearance at the office the next day. I was identified as the culprit and questioned about my role. I denied everything but by then it was too late, the company began churning out anti-union memos and support for our effort faded. As an example of their good will I was not fired.

Failing that I joined the IWW and proudly pay dues even though it doesn't



affect my work place. Their talk of worker control (even if it is only talk) is the kind of talk I want to hear. Other unions may have big memberships and loads of money, but they are mostly full of shit. They sold out years ago and are paying the price now.

As I mentioned, I supervise a home for handicapped people. When I tell people what I do their reply is always the same: "Oh that's great, you are doing God's work!" or "You don't make much money do you?" Wanting to bash their brains in, I tell them it's not "God's work", it's the dirty work of the state and system which regards human needs as secondary. The politicians like to have their pictures taken with smiling retarded people but that is the extent of their good will. Pennsylvania group homes are run for profit by individuals who form companies and get funds from the state. The agreement benefits both since the individual makes a profit and the state doesn't have to pay union scale or benefits.

No I don't make a lot of money! How the fuck could I?

Group homes are spread across the state. The area I work in has 13 homes and a day program. The concept of a group home may look good but it doesn't work. Homes were set up so that higher functioning clients (our word for the people we work with) could attain skills needed to integrate into the community. Instead, clients are dumped in sites regardless of ability. Some sit in chairs drooling and staring at television. Others have so many medical problems and are so medicated you wonder how they

THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW

IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER LOOK AT *HOW THE NEWS WORKS*... FIRST, THE MEDIA REPORT THE DAY'S OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS, GIVING SELF-SERVING LIES AND SPIN-CONTROL EFFORTS THE LEGITIMACY OF ACTUAL NEWS...

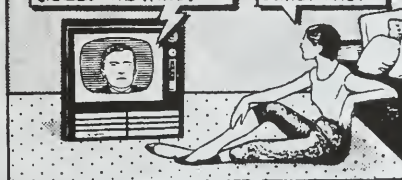
THE PRESIDENT TODAY BLAMED THE FALTERING ECONOMY ON FANATICAL COCAINE-CRAZED LIBYAN TERRORISTS WORKING SECRETLY TO SABOTAGE OUR FREE-MARKET SYSTEM!



THE RESULTS OF THESE POLLS ARE THEN REPORTED ON THE NEWS, CREATING A SELF-FULFILLING SENSE OF PUBLIC CONCERN OVER AN IMAGINARY THREAT TO THE REPUBLIC...

--A NEW POLL SHOWS THAT 94% OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED OF COCAINE-CRAZED LIBYANS!

GOODNESS--HOW VERY ALARMING! SOMEONE SHOULD DO SOMETHING!



POLLSTERS THEN PROCEED TO ASK A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE A SET OF QUESTIONS CAREFULLY WORDED TO PRODUCE A DESIRED RESULT, WITH NO MARGIN FOR AMBIGUITY...

WOULD YOU BE AFRAID IF FANATICAL COCAINE-CRAZED LIBYAN TERRORISTS WERE IN YOUR BASEMENT WITH AN ATOMIC BOMB? YES OR NO?



WELL--YES!

...WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION THEN USES TO JUSTIFY ACTIONS THAT IN NO WAY BENEFIT THE CITIZENRY IT PURPORTS TO SERVE.

THEREFORE ALL CIVIL LIBERTIES ARE IMMEDIATELY SUSPENDED AND THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN GRANTED DICTATORIAL POWERS.

WELL...IT'S FOR OUR OWN GOOD!



are able to stay alive.

The workers are supposed to be an idealistic type willing to work for slave wages, even though they are generally not the social welfare types. If they are, they eventually decide to work in other fields once they get a taste of group home work. We get a cross section of displaced workers from every walk of life. Many sincerely believe in the work

they do. Other times small time thieves are hired, copy the keys and rob the site of appliances and money. Most people are doing the job until they find something else, so they say. Because of our rotten economy, more people like myself are staying. This bothers the company because they may have to pay us pensions one day.

I am a "supervisor." I'm paid by the hour. I have no power to hire or fire. I "supervise" 2 workers and 3 clients. I'm proud to say that my co-workers and I have completely rearranged the work place according to our own needs. We come to work when we want and leave when we want. We cover for each other in every way and recognize that our loyalties are with each other rather than management. As supervisor, it's my job to do all the mindless paperwork, feed and medicate clients, take them to appointments, meet with case workers and family, create behavior modification programs, handle finances and if someone shits in their shorts I have to clean it up.

My guys are a fun group. One man has a fetish for calendars and menus. He can tell you the day your birthday falls on in a given year. He has a history of running out of the house and terrorizing diners or supermarkets. My favorite

ROVING BANDS OF DELINQUENT PROOFREADERS



graphic by Susan T. Miller

story was the time he burst into a church demanding holy calendars in the midst of a choir practice. Because of him we have to lock ourselves into the house lest he run wild. Another man is a clean freak who only cares about doing chores. The third man in the group is a non-stop talker who idolizes Lawrence Welk. His passion is coffee and if you don't give him his daily ration you are in for some heavy shit. Given all the craziness, the job is extremely stressful. The turnover rate is high and some people have had breakdowns on the job.

The company I work for is your typical hierarchical outfit. The President is the sole shareholder in the company. She sits like a grand poobah over her empty bureaucratic domain of accountants and useless middle managers. We are one big happy family working together in peace and prosperity. Family style management is the most misleading, unfair and ultimately ridiculous attempt at making workers powerless. The company tries to include us in decision making but once we complain they do whatever they damn well please. When we point out the humanitarian need for our work and just pay, they call it a business. When we call it a business they call it humanitarian. Recognizing that unionization is a threat to their moneymaking scam, they have given workers like me the title of supervisor, thinking that we will believe we are management. Once a year they dole out pitiful raises of 25 cents an hour and lump sum bonuses that amount to 12 to 15 cents per hour. Of course all this is incumbent on whether or not the state has any money. Of course, there shouldn't be a profit making middle person standing between the state and workers to begin with. Those that do the work should get the money.

Because I work in a house, my boss expected me to do repairs and yard work. I explained to her that since I do not own the house it was not my responsibility. Every week the grass grew taller and taller. The rebellion spread to other sites and they had to hire a maintenance man. So not only did I decrease my workload by standing up to the assholes, but I helped someone else get a job. Another time my boss informed me that I would have to dress the part. Anyone in their right mind knows that working with handicapped people is not the cleanest job. I told her that I would only comply with company policy if the company gave me a fat raise to pay for all the luxurious clothing they wanted me to



SUCK MY NATION!

wear. They eventually gave up.

We do get 2 months paid vacation a year, but every second of it is needed since you are usually on the verge of insanity by the time a vacation comes around. As for medical benefits, we pay into the insurance company each payday plus there is a large deductible. The plan only helps you if you have a serious problem. At one time the money was deducted according to your salary. But the higher ups "democratized" the process by making it a flat rate for everyone. Thus someone who makes \$50,000 a year pays the same as someone who makes \$15,000 a year. Because lower scale workers are more numerous they wind up paying for the less numerous higher scale people. I don't even call the higher ups workers since I've never been able to understand what they do, besides sitting on their fat asses.

So having said all this, why do I do it? My occupation may seem benign because it seeks to help the disadvantaged, but I'm still a worker and I'm still getting screwed. I dislike being a slave but recognize the need to support myself. Imagine trying to live off the meager crumbs the state gives

you for being on welfare. People constantly say, "Why don't you quit if you don't like it." or "Find a better job."

I don't subscribe to the quitter school. In the American economy there are no "better jobs." The high paying manufacturing and technology base has eroded and even if Japan and other countries opened their doors to trade what would we sell them? America makes great military weapons but when was the last time you bought a surface to air missile?

So the options are few, you can hop from slave job to slave job or you can stay in a job and try to radicalize the workplace. I have chosen to stay. It is fine to theorize and complain about the work place. But it seems to me that words must eventually lead to action. Change never has been easy in this country, but it happens when people take a principled stand. I don't profess to have all the answers, nor can I be a guide for others who must make an individual choice. I know one thing: I'm staying for the long run and I'm going to be a pain in the ass until they carry me away kicking and screaming.

—Jeff Kelly

CONFESSIONS OF A SPERM DONOR

BRIGHTON, ENGLAND, THE mid 1980s. A deep malaise saps the energy of this once-proud nation. Everything is gray. And damp. The next General Election is an eternity away and there's precious little hope of a Labor victory anyway. Thatcher survives a bomb attack, bouncing back with renewed popularity. The miners are on strike forever, and with every passing day seem less likely to achieve their demands. Unemployment is up, public health care down, public housing being sold off. For students (of which I am one), cuts increasingly make higher education a sport for the rich. Everyone I know is on the fiddle, "freelancing" at some menial cash-in-hand job to supplement their unemployment benefit or student grant.

This then is the stark background against which I became a professional wanker.

On and off for about two years I supplemented my paltry student grant (and later, once I had graduated to the dole queue, my unemployment benefit), by donating my sperm: £7 a sample, two samples a week, Tuesday and Thursday mornings. To write of it now is liberating since I never get to mention it on my résumé.

There I was, strapped for cash and work-shy, faced with the harsh reality of having to find some source, however modest, of income. It was while I was working Saturdays in a toy store that I heard from a friend about the sperm bank. To someone like me—earning £1.25 an hour selling play-dough—jerk-

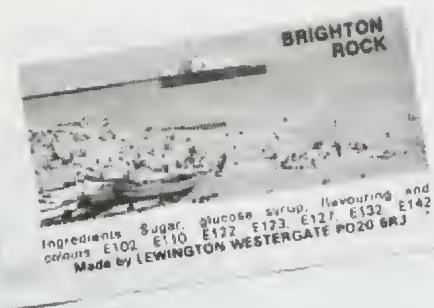
ing off for £7 a shot seemed like a very civilized way to make ends meet. Admittedly, £14 a week wasn't much, but it covered my weekly food bill; besides, I thought, right now most of my sperm just ends up on the sheets—why not get paid for it instead?

Unfortunately, my first test sample was rejected. "They all died," the female doctor said unkindly of my sperm when I called by phone to learn the results. Silence. "Look, why don't you try again next week," she said, sensing my dejection. I did, as much out of anxiety as out of a need to make money—if my sperm was defective I wanted to know about it.

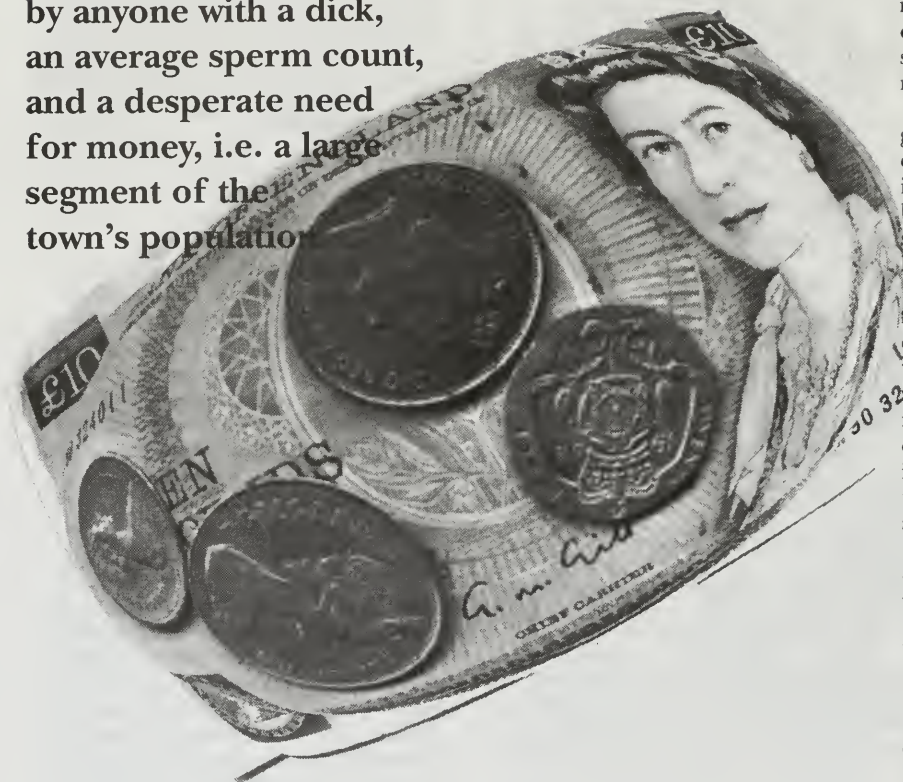
Second time lucky. Thus began what was to become for me a Tuesday and Thursday morning ritual. First thing, before I even cleaned my teeth, I would

ejaculate into a small plastic jar (I had a bag of them stashed under the bed). Undoubtedly the hardest parts of the job were: a) having the presence of mind first thing in the morning to have the jar handy, and b) making sure it was angled correctly to receive the valuable fluid. This achieved (and I missed more than once), all I had to do was screw the top on the jar and place it in one of the white plastic pouchs supplied by the sperm bank, taking care to keep the jar upright. Each pouch had a tag on which I wrote my code number—everything anonymous, no names. From the point of ejaculation the clock was ticking, since a condition of employment was that the sperm be delivered within one hour of its production, while it was still fresh.

The clinic which housed the sperm bank was an institutional red brick building, the sperm bank itself part of an annex that was nothing more than a glorified prefabricated hut. I delivered my pouch to an office staffed by three middle-aged women who were always in the middle of a conversation. At first this was a source of some embarrassment, but it quickly became a financial transaction like any other. I would hand over the pouch (which they gingerly placed in a shallow cardboard tray, along with any other recently-arrived samples), and give them my code number. In exchange they paid me £7 cash. The transaction took about two minutes and was usually



The position could be filled by anyone with a dick, an average sperm count, and a desperate need for money, i.e. a large segment of the town's population



accompanied by pleasantries about the weather.

What kind of qualifications does one need to be a sperm donor? Contrary to popular mythology, donors were not required to have the body of a Greek god, the brain of Einstein, and the sperm count of a prize bull. In fact, on the contrary, it seemed the position could be filled by anyone with a dick, an average sperm count, and a desperate need for money, i.e. a large segment of the town's population.

Because the semen market was limited, there was, in the interest of avoiding competition, a tacit agreement amongst the donors that information about the sperm bank be given sparingly. Although contact with other donors rarely amounted to more than a comradely nod as you crossed paths entering or leaving the clinic, it was instinctively understood that we were on to a good thing, and that our interests were best served by keeping quiet about it. To those hundreds of young men toiling away in drudge jobs paying less than £2 an hour, the idea of getting paid £7 for having a wank would've seemed too good to be true. If word got around we'd be competing with the

sperm of every Tom, Dick, and Harry, and the pressure of performing under such conditions would doubtless diminish the quality of our product. For that reason we kept it our little secret.

Until that time I'd never given my sperm much thought. It had always seemed the right color and consistency, and the quantity seemed about right. Now I put it in a jar and scrutinized it twice weekly. I was amazed at how much it varied in quality and quantity one week to the next. Sometimes, when it was thick and creamy, I affected a manly swagger as I entered the clinic; other times it was transparent and thin, like runny snot, and I would make a hasty exit before my meager offering was discovered and someone from the clinic came chasing after me, demanding their money back. Such inferior samples could usually be explained by a drinking binge, having a cold, being stressed out, too much recreational wanking, or (more rarely) having got laid the night before.

Nor did the erratic quality of my produce go unnoticed at the clinic. Several times during my career I was "laid off" for periods of a month at a time. On one occasion when I went to deliver my morning offering, the woman behind

the desk consulted her list to find a notation against my number. "Have a rest, dear," she said with a tone of concern that made me suspect she knew something I didn't. "Come back in a month," she said. I left crestfallen.

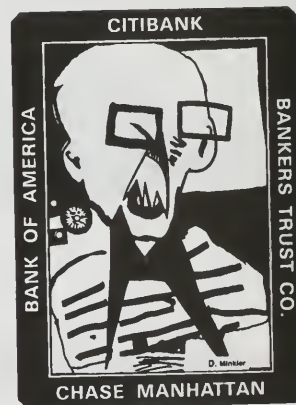
One day out of the blue I was asked to give a blood sample, and they asked me questions about my medical history, and if I smoked marijuana. I lied. That they bothered to interview me makes me suspect that I am a biological father at least once.

How does it feel being the possible father of an indefinite number of progeny? Actually, it doesn't feel like anything. I don't lie awake at night wondering about the child(ren) I will never know, contemplating a gallant quest against all odds to discover their identity. I have barely given it a second thought. I was, you might say, profoundly alienated from my labor.

Even if I wanted to, there's no way I can ever find out if my sperm was even used for artificial insemination, let alone the identity of the child(ren) that may be my biological offspring. Nor, I am assured, is there any way they can find me. Strangely this has never really made me anything more than slightly curious. The one time I did feel uneasy about the idea of someone profiting from my bodily fluids (after all, £7 is not much for a life), I rationalized that it was a National Health Service, i.e. free, clinic, and persuaded myself that I was helping give the miracle of life to unhappy young couples who, for whatever reason, couldn't have biological children of their own.

But really it was just the easiest way I knew of at the time to make money, the path of least resistance. At £7 for ten minutes work, prorated it still works out as the best hourly wage I've ever made. And what's more, I loved my job.

—*Iguana Mente*



graphic by Doug Minkler

REVIEWS

The Let's Get ^{Small} Press Department

At first blush, it might appear that Bay Area zine publishers are obsessed with sex. In even the best of times one might ask, well, who isn't?

There never were any good old days. The recent interminable, empty debate over "family values" and the bone-chilling cynicism it betrays are all part of the moral bankruptcy in this "moaning of America." With Sarajevo and South Central L.A. but a channel-hop away, we see the spectacle of cities burning somewhere beyond that horizon, behind the phosphordot screen which is a window-substitute.

"Gossip is the new pornography," Michael Murphy says to Woody Allen in *Manhattan*. One doesn't have to be a Fergie or a Mia or Woody, however, to see in this daynage privacy besieged. Anyone who doesn't buy into these cut-rate "family values" risks being branded a sexual outlaw, the new pariah.

In an information economy, the body more than ever is in question, with death, pleasure, freedom and responsibility locked in a nightmare embrace. Sex as a commodity represents "the world's oldest profession"—yet it is also a natural law imperative of lovers and libertines which, leaving aside the procreative urge to survive via one's offspring, is one area of human experience most resistant to official injunction. Attitudes to and expressions of sexual necessity are as good a barometer of the state of things as

Anything That Moves #4. This mag, subtitled "beyond the myths of bisexuality," is really omniseual, "creating a movement for acceptance and support of human diversity." With articles on bis in Germany, media criticism of the British press's post mortem trashing of Queen singer Freddie Mercury, an advice column "What Your Mother Never Told You" and much more. \$6, 4/\$25. Checks to BABN, 2404 California St. #24, SF, CA 94115.

Diseased Pariah News #5. Talk about yer bad attitude, what could be more twisted than gallows humor by and about People With AIDS? *DPN* may be

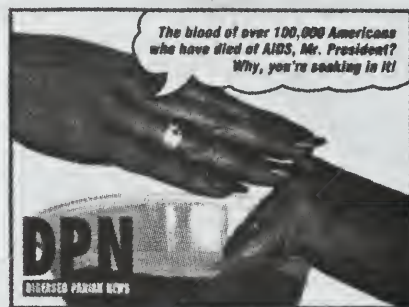
dark, but it manages to be both hilarious and mordant, with a sprinkling of recipes ("GET FAT, don't die!"), reviews of books (Derek Humphry's *Final Exit*, a how to commit suicide manual), reviews of dildoes, a centerfold boy, another advice column ("Ask Aunt Kaposi"), and in this recent issue, a flexi-disc ("Songs of *DPN*"). c/o Men's Support Center, POB 30564, Oakland, CA 94604. \$3; 4/\$10.

Frighten the Horses #8-9. "My dear, I don't care what these affectionate people do, as long as they don't do it in the streets and frighten the horses." This line from the Gay Nineties well describes this "document of the sexual revolution." A melange of social commentary, news, reviews, fiction and poetry, these issues include a reprint from Valerie Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto*, a Michael Botkin article on the recent NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) witch hunt by local media opportunists. Kim Addonizio tells a nasty "Bedtime Story." Cris Gutierrez ruminates on rape in "Men Are Dogs," and tells how learning that male orangutans rape females yielded new insights into the male condition, while Kris Kovic has an idea or two on "What to Do with Rapists." On a lighter note, Susan Carlton takes us behind the scenes at Disneyland to a fantastic orgy island. Editor Mark Pritchard sets the tone, both playful and deadly serious, in a cautionary column linking the high mortality rate of walk-on characters in *Star Trek* (often dead before the opening credits run) with the marginalized poor, female, people of color, and queer, warning that "Your guest appearance is likely to be very brief." Provocative, and once read, indispensable. \$4, 4/\$14. 41 Sutter St. #1108, SF, CA 94104

Girljock #5-6. A fun, spunky mag for jockettes and wannabes—"fuck the well of loneliness; we're here to have fun." Susie Bright talks about life after *On Our Backs*, and how she isn't really a jock, being the child of nerds. Lotsa readers

write in with tales of paradise lust and sundry indiscretions. Angela Bocage has some "Major Fun" telling comicstyle the "unrepentant confessions of a baton twirler." Laura Miller defends female energy conservation in "Girl Sloth." Wicked, wonderful stuff. \$2.95, 4/\$12. 2060 Third St., Berkeley, CA 94710.

No Longer Silent! #4/5. After a couple of years' hiatus, this digest-sized zine is back with a vengeance. Editor Eliza Blackweb takes issue with the sympathetic attention shown elsewhere in the anarchist press for NAMBLA and other sexual outlaws she views as abusive. Both *NLS!* and *Frighten the Horses* provide crucial information on "Regaining Control... Taking Health Care Into Our Own Hands" with "Guerrilla Abortion in the Post-Roe 90s." Pretty wide coverage, ranging from Rodney King, billboard alteration, "Radical Women in the Sex Industry," a Lester Bangs reprint, and some very fine color graphics. POB 3582, Tucson, AZ 85722. \$3, 5/\$10.



Prisoncamp Reality, by Bob Z. This is a ghoulish but elegant pocket chapbook of about 40 poems by the singer, posterer, publisher of *Bad Newz*, and all-round dangerous dude. Hard to resist with titles like "You're a Miserable Cog in the Wheel, Johnny" and lines that run "whether or not we consent we get searched/by bureaucrats filled with contempt for humanity/more and more frequently driving us in/to the dark recesses of prisoncamp reality." The tape is about an hour in length, and Bob's razor rasping brings out the best in his fugitive rhymes and repetitions. Panic Button Press. POB 14318, SF, CA 94114. \$3.95 book; \$5.95 tape; \$8.95 both ppd.

Real Girl #3. This one's a winner. Edited by Angela Bocage, this comiczine features some familiar names—Tom Tomorrow, Kris Kovic,

and of course Angela—as well as some welcome discoveries, covering everything from “The Psychobabology of Women’s Humor” (about dyke stand-up comedians) to an amusing S & M coming of age story by Judy Becker. Available from Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115. \$3.50

Taste of Latex #6. The current issue might just as aptly be titled “Taste of Leather,” focusing on S & M. Plenty here to whet the appetite, with photos by Mark Chester, Charles Gatewood, Michael Rosen, and Fakir Musafar; interview with dyke dominatrix (and bitchin’ writer) Pat Califia, submission fantasies by local performer Divianna Ingravallo. Very educational, with “The Practicing Pervert: Negotiation 101,” by Michael Decker. Considering how raw the eroticism, this is a pretty slick package, for the kinkier coffee tables...on or off the rack. \$5, 4/\$20. POB 460122, SF, CA 94146.

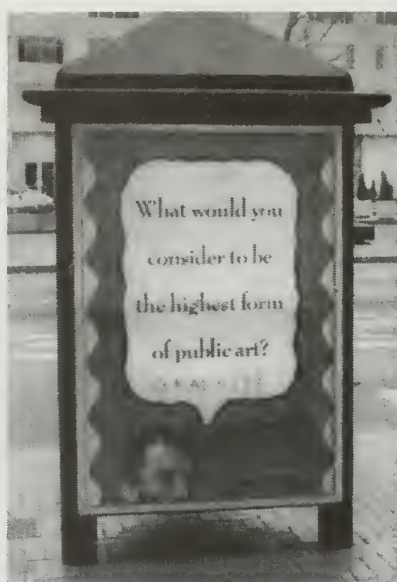
—D.S. Black

American Dream

Video. 1 hour, 45 minutes, Produced & Directed by Barbara Kopple

American Dream is a gripping documentary about the epic mid-’80s strike against the Hormel meatpacking company in Austin, Minnesota. As a detailed dissection of the plight of organized labor in the current period, the film serves brilliantly. As a reflective look at the underlying causes within the union “movement” and within workers themselves, it comes up considerably short, and the viewer is left to sort through the depressing outcome to try and understand why on one’s own.

The film opens with excerpts from early 1980’s newscasts about the PATCO strike, bankruptcies and union contract concessions. Cut to meatpackers going door to door in the small company town of Austin, Minnesota—your quintessential community in the American heartland. Hormel, in spite of making a \$30 million profit on its bacon, spam, deviled ham, etc., is demanding the workers take a 23% wage cut, from \$10.69/hr. to \$8.25/hr.—a familiar situation (see *PW*’s lengthy account of the Watsonville Cannery strike in issues 15-19). Incredible scenes from inside the factory show the casual brutality of processing pigs into “meat products,” the kind of footage meatpacking companies prefer we don’t see.



Zoe Noc

A public speakout at the union hall lets us see middle class Americans (that is to say, workers) decrying the impending wage cuts—one fellow reads off three different wage stubs from the past years: \$690 a week, then \$475 a week after the incentive/bonus program was eliminated, and finally \$325 when the first wage concession took hold, and he’s working harder than ever (sound familiar?). It’s clear there’s no more room to cut if these people are going to maintain their vaunted American standard of living. In a kitchen scene with two wives, one is saying “I don’t begrudge anyone making \$30-\$40-\$50,000 a year, but let us live in our \$32,000 house!” Hormel workers living in the surrounding communities with mortgages of only \$200 a month are worried about keeping up their payments.

Jim Guyette, president of Local P-9, voices over the obvious truth that U.S. labor has been taking a beating, and something new has to be done. Enter Ray Rogers and his consultancy, Corporate Campaign. He promises to win a big victory in Austin, not just for Local P-9, but for the entire U.S. labor movement. People’s spirits rise as Rogers’ charismatic promises strike a responsive chord. Rogers promises “experts” on political and community organizing who will help the local, while the campaign will attack “irresponsible” corporate behavior through a negative media campaign. Additionally, the Corporate Campaign reveals the links between different institutions that invisibly support the Hormel Company as it tries to im-

pose the wage cut, e.g. the local bank.

Kopple’s camera is everywhere throughout the two years of the organizing leading up to the strike and through the strike itself. We go to Washington DC and meet Lewie Anderson, director of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union’s (the parent union) meatpacking division. He represents 100,000 workers in 95 companies, and is quick to declare that “they’re [P-9] not gonna win through the Corporate Campaign... it will cost them their jobs.” We find Lewie meeting with a small faction of P-9 workers who are unhappy with the Ray Rogers approach, and are worried about losing their jobs. They seek help from the International to try to change the direction that their local is taking, but the support for Guyette and Rogers is too strong.

The main line of attack by Anderson and the International is to claim that since the Corporate Campaign is frank about the failures of mainstream unionism and vehemently opposes the International’s advice to accept a concessionary contract, they are “anti-union.” Lewie Anderson is quoted several times to the effect that “anti-unionism is oozing from the ranks,” when the workers are loudly disdainful of his concessionary advice. The pro-International dissidents try to ask questions of Rogers in a union meeting but are aggressively ridiculed and berated from the podium by Rogers himself.

Food support and money are pouring in from workers and unions across the country. A P-9 caravan is out raising money and solidarity. One can’t help but be inspired by the energy and cohesion among the P-9 strikers and community. Even the conservative dissidents concede in a private meeting that people are at the union hall, playing cards, pool, talking to each other, and so on. “People are sharing... opening up... crying...” Local leader Jim Guyette says “The union hall has become a fun place to be—families come there.”

In the middle of the film, spirits are still running high, solidarity is incredibly strong, and Hormel workers from the nearby factory in Ottumwa are holding a solidarity rally. A fellow says “I see forty guys and girls who used to look dead, and you’ve resurrected them to life!” In a crucial moment the camera is showing us an exuberant dance party at the union hall and Guyette is explaining how meatpackers who were “amateur” carpenters fixed people’s homes, “guys

who like to work on cars are fixing each others' cars—they [the workers] did what they like to do—they did their hobbies." Filmmaker Kopple thankfully included this exciting glimpse of a radically different way to approach life, but seems to have missed its importance, perhaps because of her own political biases toward (relatively) uncritical support of unionism. Here, in the midst of what became a crushing defeat, were the seeds of a radical break with the Economy and the wage-labor/money nexus: people following their inclinations and proclivities and freely sharing their skills without any concern for remuneration. A further exploration of the psychological impacts of this part of the story is sorely missed.

Seventeen weeks into the strike, Hormel shifted most production to other plants and management workers were turning out thousands of cans of spam at the Austin plant. Lewie Anderson knew that a bad contract imposed on P-9's workforce would wreck industry wage standards, but was more interested in getting them back to work on company terms. No International effort was made to mobilize support from other meatpackers throughout the industry in order to tip the balance in favor of P-9 strikers. Anderson advises instead "if you want a job, you have to take it" [the concessions].

At the strike's 20th week, Hormel reopened the plant, and 7 workers returned to work. A spirited, militant car blockade circles the plant at 4 a.m., with Ray Rogers making sure that if anyone was stopped by the police, "no one is in charge here—there's just been a lot of cars breaking down [in the sub-zero temperatures]." Minnesota's then-Governor Rudy Perpich calls out the National Guard to "keep order," and soon

locals who have been without work for anywhere from one to six years are scabbing at the plant. After the factory has been reopened for 10 days, 75 workers have returned to work and 400 replacements have been hired.

At an open union meeting, workers discuss the pressure they're feeling to cross the picket line. An older worker gets up and states what should have been obvious months earlier: "We have to shut down ALL the Hormel plants, or else all go back in together!" The P-9 executive board votes unanimously to dispatch roving pickets to other plants, in spite of the worries that some express about forcing other workers to support them (they themselves supposedly were striking "voluntarily"). Other strikers were quick to point out that they had been forced to strike by the company's assault. 571 workers lost their jobs at other Hormel plants for honoring the roving picket lines.

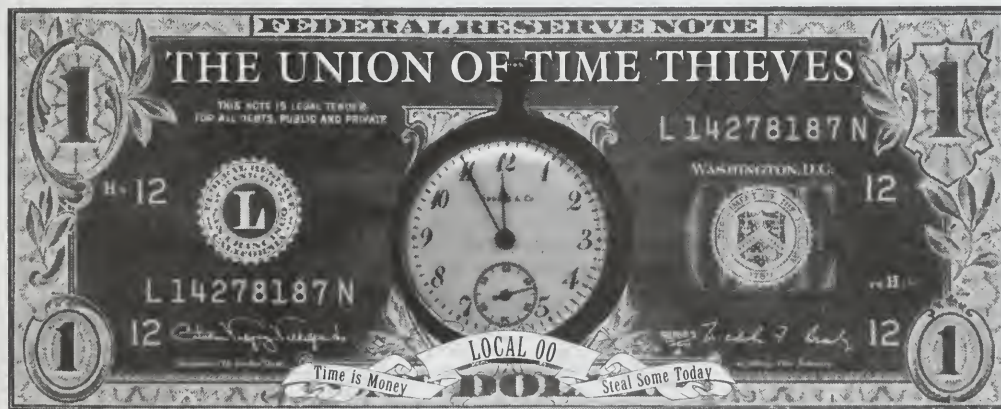
The UFCW International cut off \$40-a-week strike benefits and ordered an end to the strike. In March 1986, the 25th week of the strike, Hormel announced the plant was full and no jobs were left. In June '86, the UFCW put Local P-9 into trusteeship. Quickly they settled with Hormel. They agreed to a contract that provided \$10.25 for the scabs who broke the strike and no amnesty for strikers. Ultimately only 20% of the strikers went back to work for Hormel. In 1989 Hormel leased half the plant to a non-union company who hired meatpackers for \$6.50 an hour.

In a (deliberately, unintentionally?) ironic conclusion, Kopple takes us back to an earlier scene of a rousing rendition of "Solidarity Forever" at the union hall, while post-mortems run up the screen. Lewie Anderson was fired by the International in 1989 for opposing the

concessionary bargaining position. Ray Rogers went on with his Corporate Campaign, conducting campaigns against Eastern and American Airlines and some other companies too. Jim Guyette moved to New York and got a job with a union there. One of the former conservative dissidents who crossed the picket line became the new head of Local P-9.

American Dream is fascinating cinema verité labor history. Its strength lies in how well it takes you inside the painful reality faced by each of the labor protagonists, from the workers' wives to the International representative. In showing the Corporate Campaign and the militant rank-and-file unionism of Local P-9 in such detail the film emphasizes the bitter choices faced by workers and their unions in a brutal world market. As a document of a symbolic struggle and a crushing defeat, I wish the filmmaker had included some reflections on what happened and why.

Curiously absent from the film were any overt leftists. Given the socialist roots of many working class families in Minnesota, I couldn't help by wonder if they had been edited out, possibly to appeal to preconceived notions of what would "fly" with middle America. In the literary journal *Caliban*, Kevin Magee describes a large mural painted on the side of the Austin Labor Center by P-9 strikers and supporters. In the picture, a line of faceless workers in colorless clothes enters a factory, which has a giant snake wound around it. From under the snake's bleeding head (which has been cut by a woman in a butcher's smock with a blade labeled "P-9") another line of workers emerges. They have faces, defined features, and wear colorful clothes. They carry banners that read: "International Labor Solidarity: Abolish Apartheid," "Farmers and Labor



graphic by Iguaña Menté

Unite," "Families Fight Back," and the bottom righthand corner has a picture of Nelson Mandela. At the top of the wall hangs the an anonymous quote from a 19th century meatpacker: "If blood be the price of your cursed wealth good God we have paid in full."

But maybe there really weren't any leftists involved in the strike, and this mural was completed long after the filming was finished. I don't know. Ray Rogers is shown during a *New York Times* interview at the end of the strike (and film) trying to put a positive spin on the whole thing, refusing to acknowledge the fact of defeat. It is unfortunately typical of labor activists that it's very hard to admit a defeat and draw lessons from it. (See the earliest *Processed World's* #1 and 2 for a similar occurrence after the end of the Blue Shield strike in 1981).

I suppose I should thank Kopple for sparing us academic or union talking heads, but why not ask participants to deliver post mortems? If the Corporate Campaign's claims to nationwide symbolic importance were accurate, surely there are working class intellectuals who might offer some analysis of the defeat, a critical look at the weaknesses of both the Corporate Campaign and traditional trade unionism, both brightly illuminated in this story.

—Chris Carlsson

The Productivity Work-Over

The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure by Juliet B. Schor (Basic Books, 1991, \$21.00)

No one would accept two daily hours of slavery. To be accepted, slavery must be of such a daily duration as to break something in a man.

—Simone Weil, "Factory Work"

Harvard professor and *Z* magazine columnist Juliet Schor argues that the U.S. is overburdened with ever-increasing work and that it's way past time to reduce work. She presents a great deal of interesting research to show the human and social costs of the daily grind, but backs off from making any emancipatory conclusions. As leftist pop sociology, *The Overworked American* is a schizo recipe of ideas.

Schor's unhumble discovery should be obvious enough to most people—a speed-up of the social factory over the last two decades amounting to an extra

month of work—but its a novel observation for academia and the media, where all talk of work (except to call for more of it) is forbidden. Schor proves conclusively that there's too much work; not only are there more and more workers (particularly teenagers and women) working longer hours at more and more (low-paying) jobs, but professionals are also being worked ragged.

Using government and business statistics, Schor shows that a huge amount of the work presently being done serves no purpose in terms of contributing to productivity levels. However, she still ties workers' gains (specifically, shortened work hours) to increases in productivity. This rings pretty hollow given the dismal legacy of collective bargaining.



"We could now reproduce our 1948 standard of living (measured in terms of goods and services) in less than half the time it took in 1948. We actually could have chosen the four hour day. Or a working year of six months. Or imagine this: every worker in the United States could now be taking every other year off from work, with pay." Putting aside the question of whose "1948 standard of living," there's some problems with basing an argument for less work in terms of a productivity level that by its very nature must expand exponentially.

Schor calls the failure of working time to keep pace with increases in automation and capacity a "productivity deficit." She argues that "we" made a mistake when we traded shortened hours for more money—thus trapping us in a "cycle of work and spend" which is responsible for the current overload of work ("keeping up with the Jones," as

she puts it). Although she demolishes the neoclassical argument that capitalism gives people the work and goods they seek, by locating the source of overwork in overconsumption she accepts the same supply-and-demand argument. For consumers with diminishing paychecks, she advocates Buddhist austerity economics and "less is more-ism." Yuck.

While Schor recommends that we renounce our share of the goodies in favor of free time, she is very concerned that productivity levels be maintained ("there are effective productivity-raising substitutes for long hours"). Even after an historical analysis of housework that shows that "productivity" as it's currently measured is a scam that overlooks most work (because it isn't translated into wages), she considers productivity to be a sacrosanct category and a legitimate indicator of living standards. But production for what? For its own sake? Shouldn't a discussion of shortening work time address work's social usefulness? Nowhere in the book does Professor Schor deal with the possibility of eliminating work-producing industries that are not only counterproductive socially but highly destructive as well, i.e. real estate, finance, the law, advertising, military, etc.

The point of *The Overworked American* is to convince management that a well-rested and less-stressed work-force is good for productivity ("In the international market, what matters in the long run is not how many hours a person works, but how productively he or she works them"). Schor seeks nothing more radical than "a transformation of the corporate culture." Her proposals for escaping the work treadmill (overtime swaps and stuff) sound okay but preserve things as they already are, leaving us vulnerable to the same old shit. So what's Schor's goal? "If a workplace reform is done right, a company can gain loyalty and productivity from its employees at no cost...It is clear that money can be saved if people are managed better." In fact, she boasts that many of her proposals are already being implemented by many "enlightened, forward-looking companies," including Hewlett-Packard, Wells Fargo and Xerox!

As overdue as a discussion of reducing work may be, doing it in the name of productivity and renewed competitiveness is just bullshit. I'd feel just as overworked at Schor's six-hour day company.

—Mickey D.

A RIVER'S REVENGE!

Surrealist Implications of the Chicago Flood

"This isn't funny."—Mayor Richard Daley, 13 April 1992, in his first statement to the press on the flood.

"As the offices emptied, there was little sense of the alarm or panic usually associated with major disasters -- More typical was the humor and even giddiness with which many greeted the unexpected holiday." —Chicago Tribune, 14 April 1992, page 1.

"I feel like a kid getting out of school because of snow."—a woman telephone worker, quoted in the Tribune, 14 April 1992

I Any sudden end of "business as usual" ushers in possibilities for everything that is neither business nor usual. Every interruption in the "normal functioning" of government and commerce reveals glimpses of a new society that is the very negation of such sorry afflictions. Momentarily freed of the stultifying routine of "making a living," people find themselves confronted with a rare opportunity to live.

In these *unmanageable* situations, the absolute superfluity of all "management" becomes hilariously obvious. Uninhibited by the presence of bosses, supervisors and other agents of hierarchical power, those who have rarely been more than exploited victims of a slave system begin to act like free human beings, relying—in many cases for the first time since childhood—on their own initiative, their own resources.

With the chains of authority broken, or at least in disuse, the wonders of solidarity and mutual aid are rediscovered as if by magic. Long-time prisoners of the insufferable workaday world revel in the inexhaustible pleasures of not working. Spontaneously and joyfully, those who have always been "bored to death" reinvent, starting from zero, a life worth living. The oppressive tyranny of obligations, rules, sacrifice, obedience, realism and a multitude of

so-called "lesser evils" gives way to the creative anarchy of desire. The "everyday" begins—however fleetingly—to fulfill the promise of poetry and our wildest dreams.

II "Poetry is neither tempest nor cyclone. It is a majestic and fertile river."—Isidore Ducasse, *Poesies*

"I knew there were big problems when we got reports of fish in basements."—Chicago Police Superintendent Mat Rodriguez, 13 April 1992.

For an entire exalting week, with the whole world watching, the Chicago River had the city's central business district at its mercy. The rising of this tormented, much-maligned waterway revealed the fragility and precariousness of the foundations not only of a city, but of a whole society, an entire civilization. With the power off and the lights out, the unruly river showed us how much of what affects our lives is dark and underground and hidden from view. This "freak accident" demonstrated that the seemingly vast and monolithic power of this society's repressive forces is largely an illusion maintained by the ignorance and disorganization of those who are accustomed to being repressed.

In passing, the Great Flood exposed yet again the utter worthlessness of all bureaucracy and statism in solving any fundamental problem. The raging torrents of the river's murky waters thus brought only *clarification* in their wake.

In a social set-up based on inequality and exploitation, "natural calamities" generally victimize the poor. The Chicago flood, however, hurt only the prosperous and powerful. Businessmen, cops, bankers, politicians and officials of the Board of Trade called it a "tragedy" and a "nightmare," but just about everyone else had a grand old time. Many described it as an *adventure* that they wouldn't have missed for anything.

Thanks to the flood, some 250,000 workers enjoyed at least one extra day off, with pay, and many of the homeless savored their finest meals in years (with refrigeration turned off, restaurant-owners found it cheaper to give food away than to pay for its removal).

From the start this "different kind of disaster," as someone dubbed it, was perceived by everyone but the ruling class as an image or symbol of their own latent urge to revolt.

In the river's subterranean fury every rebel against unfreedom has sensed a kindred spirit.

The river's refusal to stay in its manmade cage will long remain an inspiration for all who reject domestication and other forms of unnatural confinement. In the rising of the river we recognize the eruption and triumph of all that is forbidden, outlawed, suppressed by the enforcers of a racist, sexist, exploitative, militaristic and ecocidal Law 'n' Order. Like the Great Snow of '67, the Flood of '92 is a grand moment in the struggle to resolve the contradiction between nature and human nature. As long as nature is enslaved, humankind cannot be free.

An injury to one is an injury to all! The majesty and fertility of the river is as irrepressible as the desire for freedom. Dreamers of the world, dream like the flood!

—The Chicago
Surrealist Group
May 1992

Address all inquiries
c/o Black Swan Press,
PO Box 6424,
Evanston, IL
60204



"Hello, how are ya? You have reached the Hoffman residence. I bill my time at two hundred dollars per hour. All my time. So knowing that, if you have anything worth saying, wait for the beep and leave a message. . . Hey, wait a minute, don't hang up, only kidding. If you are not mentally ill, contagiously sick, or a member of the Communist Party. . . beeeep."

"Roger, this is your wife. Cute, real cute. Could you please erase that before I get home. I'll be late tonight, honey. The casserole is in the fridge. Just have to heat it. You can handle it."

"Rita Hoffman's office. I'm away from my desk. Leave a message."

"Hi, dear. It's me. Casserole was great, really it was. Those correspondence cooking lessons really paid off. [laughs]. Oh yeah, too bad you couldn't make it to the game. Rog Junior hit a two-run homer. You shoulda. . ."

* * *

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Hi, hon, it's me. Love your new tape. Really, Roger. Could you pick up Jenny at daycare? I'll be late again tonight. God, I hope you're home before after-school gets out. I'm counting on you, Roger. You *did* leave a message on my office machine saying you'd be home early. I'm counting on you. Gotta run, hon. They're waiting for me. Big molto meeting. Love ya."

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Hello, Mr. Hoffman. I'm going to leave a message on your machine. It's five thirty, Mr. Hoffman. We close at five o'clock. I thought we came to an understanding about this once before. This is the last time. I'll wait here with Jenny until six. See you at six, Mr. Hoffman."

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Hon, Mrs. Mitchell called. She left a message on my machine. I'm sure she left one at home, too—I mean on your own machine. You were supposed to pick up Jenny, remember?"

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Daddy, where are you? It's six thirty."

* * *



graphic by Hugh D'Andrade

"Rita Hoffman's office. I'm away from my desk. Leave a message."

"Rita, I just picked up the messages off the machine. I did not, repeat, did not agree to pick Jenny up. That is your interpretation. An expansion, really an expansion of our exchange of messages. I will not be blamed by you, by Jenny, by that Mrs. Mitchell. Do you hear me, Rita? Let me..."

"Rita Hoffman's office. I'm away from my desk. Leave a message."

"Mommy, why don't you ever pick up the phone? It's six thirty. I got your message at school that Daddy's picking me up, but he isn't here. I'll be at the Mitchell's. Can one of you please pick me up?"

"Rita Hoffman's office. I'm away from my desk. Leave a message."

"Hon, it's me. Roger. It's seven fifteen. Look, something came up. I

have to be on the coast for that merger. Plane outta here at nine o'clock. I don't have time to stop at Mitchell's. You take care of it, O.K., hon? See you Tuesday. Counting on you; see you Tuesday."

* * *

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Folks, this is Mrs. Mitchell calling. Jenny is at Protective Services. That's Protective Services. You'll find it in the phone book under California, State of. You still owe me a check for October. This is Mrs. Mitchell. 'Bye now.'"

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple. Start talking!"

"Roger, how dare you!"

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Daddy, you were supposed to pick

me up. I don't know where I am, Daddy." [Pause.]

"Mr. Hoffman, this is Sergeant Beard. Call me at 642-8001."

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Damn, I hate that tape. I landed, honey. Hope this doesn't wake you. Jenny all right? Oh yeah, I ordered the car phone. Love ya!"

* * *

"Rita Hoffman's office. I'm away from my desk. Leave a message."

"Mommy, where are you?"

* * *

"Rita objected to yesterday's tape. This one is simple: Start talking!"

"Mommy, Daddy, Mommy, Daddy, where are you?"

—David Alan Goldstein

DOWNTIME!



How To
Actually
Enjoy Your
Incredibly Inane
and Stupid Job
Now and Then
Without
Becoming A
Brainwashed
Zombie

tedious hours you spend creating profit for other people. With regular practice and steady application of these methods, you should be able to turn to your advantage any number of work situations that at best you'd rather not be at and at worst you despise down to the very nuclei of your blood cells. Please note: None of these techniques involves developing a good attitude, cultivating a genuine commitment to the company, or taking your job seriously.

1. Have sex fantasies (if you work in the sex industry, castration fantasies may be more effective for you).
2. Go into the bathroom and masturbate.
3. Experiment with just how much you can make a personal phone call sound like company business.
4. Make friends with the people you work with. It may not be a great idea to actually *fuck* the people you work with, but having genuine friends at your job can make working there somewhat less fossilizing and perhaps even marginally pleasant. It also makes it easier to waste valuable company time.
5. Impersonate your boss. (It is essential that you complete step 4 before attempting this technique. Failure to do so may result in severe embarrassment and/or loss of your job.)
6. Talk about your life. This will help you remember that you have one. However, for the sake of your intelligence and imagination as well as the sanity of your workmates, please severely limit the amount of time you spend discussing television shows.
7. Have more sex fantasies. (Yes, we know, we said this already, but it's an important technique and is worth repeating. If you haven't had a good sex fantasy in the last hour, it's time for another. Try the one about the 13th century French Crusader and the Arabian aristocrat.)
8. Have non-sexual fantasies. Make up an elaborate imaginary world in which you are brilliant and fearless and noble and wise and charming and passionate and gifted and graceful and hauntingly beautiful to boot; a world in which everyone you touch is changed forever, even your enemies grudgingly admire you, and anyone who ever sneered at you finally realizes just how

much they've misjudged you.

9. Make faces at people you talk to on the telephone.

10. Make faces at your boss behind his/her back.

11. Stare blankly out the window (assuming you have access to one. If you don't, the wall will do almost as well.) Hold a pen thoughtfully and purposefully in your hand: done correctly, this will deceive your boss into believing that you're actually thinking about your job.

12. Invent time-saving efficiency working techniques to give you more time in which to fuck off.

13. Invent new ways of making your personal projects look like company business.

14. Have even more sex fantasies. (I really can't emphasize strongly enough the importance of this technique. Keeping your libido alive is probably the most fun you can have subverting the dominant paradigm. If you're bored with the Crusades, try the one about the FBI agent and the bootlegger's lover.)

15. Experiment with just how far you can push the dress code.

16. Experiment with just how far you can stretch your breaktime/lunchtime/arrival-and-departure time.

17. Experiment with just how drunk/high you can get on your lunch hour without fucking up your position. If you are an addict, it will most likely have very limited entertainment value.

18. Go into the bathroom and masturbate some more. (What are they going to do, give you grief about the amount of time you spend on the crapper? Well, okay, they might. If this happens, explain that you have stress-related constipation, and issue vaguely threatening hints about workman's compensation, rising insurance costs, and/or possible lawsuits.)

19. Use the word processor to write letters to your friends. Use the postage machine to mail them.

20. Find new and ingenious ways to annoy your boss that you can't actually be fired for.

21. Have another sex fantasy. Don't be shy—you owe it to yourself! Always



"If there's something you've got to do and a way to enjoy it, you'd be a fool to do it any other way."

Thomas Disch, "On Wings of Song"

Hello, and welcome to the Creative Employment Opportunity (CEO) School of Employee Empowerment. The following techniques will help make it possible for you to actually enjoy a reasonable portion of the long and

sneered at you finally realizes just how

remember that you are a beautiful and unique human being, no matter how crummy your job makes you feel. You *deserve* to have dozens of sex fantasies every day of your life.

22. Plan your evening.

23. Plan your weekend.

24. Plan your next vacation.

25. Plan your life after the workers' revolution comes and you don't have to work at this stupid fucking job anymore!

26. Plot the workers' revolution.

If you feel that this lesson has been helpful but are in need of further

assistance, please consult our second-level instruction manuals, *How To Look Industrious And Responsible While Doing Your Own Creative Work On Company Time* and *101 Sex Fantasies To Keep You Entertained During An Otherwise Tedious Workday*.

— Greta Christina

Many thanks to Marian Phillips for her valuable assistance, invaluable companionship, and really weird outlook on life.



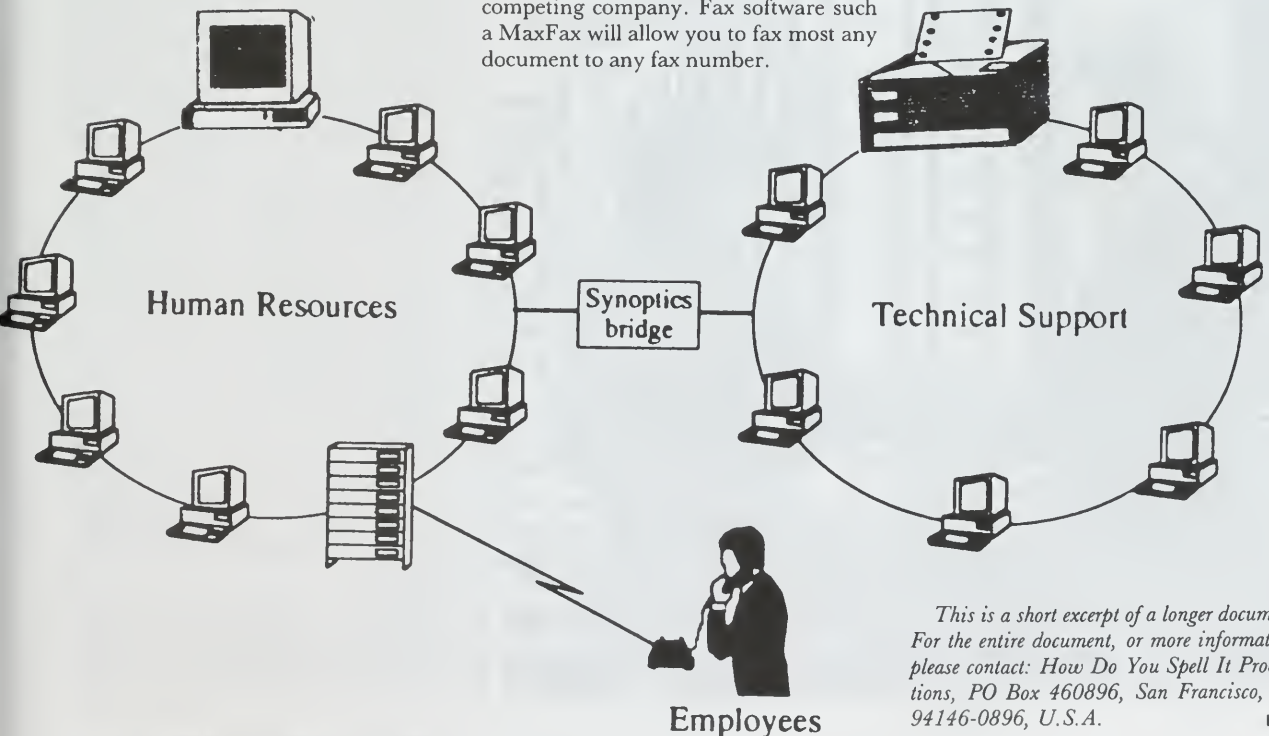
MACotage

As long as we're slave-labor drones, we might as well take what we can. Following are some ways in which Mac users can appropriate software and computer use resources for their own amusement and gain:

Fun with networked printers: Since printers are tied in to computer networks, and those networks are networked, you can print on printers other than in your own office.

Fun with mail and communications: QuickMail will allow you to "attach" documents to whatever mail message you're sending. If you're at a large organization or university, you've almost certainly got Internet access. Using QuickMail's "Address Book—Special Address" feature, you can create your very own address book with Internet e-mail addresses. Then you can send mail and/or attachments to yourself and your friends while at work. You could even e-mail confidential financial documents to your inside contact at a competing company. Fax software such as a MaxFax will allow you to fax most any document to any fax number.

Fun on file servers: It's remarkable just how forgetful, careless or ignorant system administrators and other networked users can be, even when it comes to important or confidential data. Depending on your level of access, you can move things around, copy things to your hard drive, rename files, or move folders inside folders. Fun huh? Some organizations (such as universities) actually have file servers with shareware archives that anyone can freely copy.



This is a short excerpt of a longer document. For the entire document, or more information, please contact: How Do You Spell It Productions, PO Box 460896, San Francisco, CA 94146-0896, U.S.A.

TIME THIEVES CORNER

ANNOUNCING... The Union of Time Thieves Local #00!



**WHY
TIME
THEFT?
ISN'T
THAT
ILLEGAL
?!?**

Time theft is common enough on most jobs. When we come to work late, leave early, extend our breaks and lunch hours, conduct "personal business" on the clock, we expand the time dedicated to enriching our own humanity. At the same time we make off with bits of creative human energy, stealing it back from the all-devouring machine of The Economy.

To The Economy, most of us are no more than employees of companies and consumers of goods. The premise of this arrangement is that during our time on the job we will help create wealth in excess of what we are paid. This additional wealth is the profit that The Economy demands, in fact requires, and it is stolen from us by design. The circle is completed when we buy back the goods that we contributed to pro-

ducing in the first place. Of course we then pay more than the goods "cost" to produce, because the companies that pay people to make, ship and sell them, to keep track of the money, pensions, taxes, and so on, all have a "right" to make a profit. Somewhere between the bottom and the upper-middle echelons of business life almost all of us are toiling away in this web of absurdity, while *our right* to a good life is buried beneath more powerful "rights."

During the last century there's been an incredible increase in the productivity of human labor, to the point where we are almost in sight of self-reproducing robots. Since 1948, labor productivity has more than doubled, yet today we are working an average of five weeks longer per year than we were in 1972. **WHY IS THIS?**

It is widely recognized that the system needs an "army of unemployed," both as a pool of cheap and eager labor to draw on in case of a business upturn—or a strike—and as a terrifying example to hold up to the still employed. In spite of this, The Economy is actually an incredible work creator. The Economy is a self-perpetuating way of "life" that depends on growth and profit. Human goals like good relations between people, deep and satisfying emotional and sex lives, or anything not reducible to economic numbers, are at best incidental to our work lives. Having thoroughly streamlined industrial production, reducing humans to animate machine parts in the process, economic logic is invading every part of the globe and our lives. From the search for cheap biogenetic materials in the deepest tropical jungles to the emergence of new products and services such as "career counseling" or new variations on fast food, less and less human activity goes on outside the realm of the marketplace. Paid-for "professional services" medicalize family and personal problems that often have their roots in the overwork, financial stress, and hopelessness produced by The Economy.

Time thieves recognize this dynamic and combat it every way we can. The most direct resistance available to us is to take back as much time as possible from the logic of the marketplace, beginning immediately on our own jobs.

We need to alter the pace of work to suit our own needs. Sometimes we can secretly eliminate unnecessary activities, other times we may pull a slow-

LOOK WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO US!



For years you've sold your life to buy back your survival.

**How many hours of YOUR life have been permanently wasted?
Reclaim your life! Join the Union of Time Thieves!
TIME IS MONEY! STEAL SOME TODAY!**

down. Psycho-wars between groups of workers and their managers are essential to gradually (or abruptly) changing productivity expectations.

When we control our worktime, we can structure our activities to increase free time, hiding our efficiency to retain

divided workers and often led to self-defeat. But a union of time thieves naturally unites kindred spirits across the artificial boundaries imposed by The Economy.

A Union of Time Thieves restores the original meaning of the word "union."

Once again it becomes a practical association among individuals seeking a common goal—in this case the expansion of autonomous time under our own control while on the job. To systematically increase free, creative time takes cooperation and collaboration, hence the need for a union of time thieves.

TIME THIEVES CORNER

usefulness of most of the work we do for this society. — The second 0 indicates what percentage of our time we are willing to leave under the control of people and institutions other than ourselves.

Won't you join us?

Combat the ravenous and insatiable appetite of The Economy which attempts to subject all aspects of human life to the dictatorship of its logic!

TIME IS MONEY! STEAL SOME TODAY!

Union of Time Thieves Local #00,
c/o 41 Sutter St. #1829, San Francisco, CA 94104.

Why Local #00?

Each zero has its own meaning:

— The first 0 represents the

GCB

its benefits for ourselves. Why should our ingenuity strengthen The Economy? When such efforts become organized across the boundaries of workplaces, occupations, industries, and finally national borders, we will be approaching a new way of life in which people freely choose and creatively pursue the work that together they decide they want done—the only work worth doing.

Why A Union?

Unions have become ineffective and generally corrupt institutions designed to facilitate the sale of our time to an Economy over which we have no control. They have failed to challenge the absurd and inhuman division of labor that has grown up under 200 years of capitalism. Unionism must address the bald fact that most work done today is so wasteful and harmful that it has to be eliminated, not simply reformed through improved or less brutal conditions, or even workers' control.

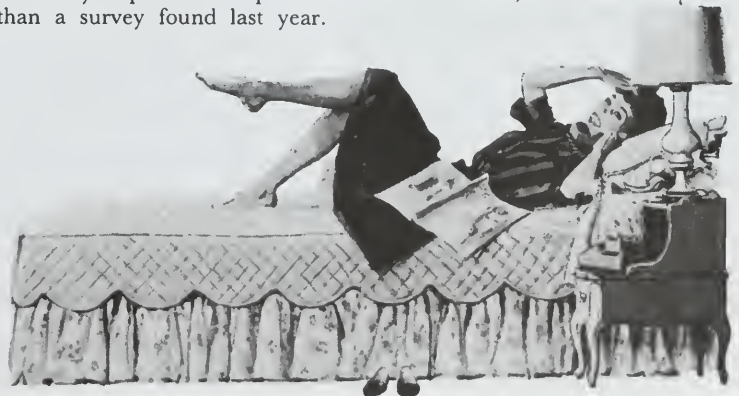
Time thieves already know that their "real lives" happen outside of what they do for money, i.e. work. The pursuit of free time and less work is a continuing statement about the basic uselessness of most jobs, and our need for greater meaning and fulfillment. Unionism based on specific jobs or industries has

Moms Don't Want Jobs!

Two out of three mothers would choose to stay at home with their children and not work if they could afford to do so. But 40 percent went back to work within three months of their baby being born. According to a survey, a third of working mothers feel guilty about being away from home and 60 percent say that child benefit payments are "very important"—9 percent more than a survey found last year.

Only 15 percent of mothers were "very keen" to return to work, 40 percent "quite keen," 24 percent "not very keen" and 20 percent "not at all" keen. Even though a large number of women said they would rather be at home, half of all the mothers who worked believed their ability to be a parent was enhanced by the change in environment, mental stimulation and social contact.

from *The Times*, London



Drawing by G.C.B.

AVON CALLING! FROM HELL!

My life took an abrupt turn for the worse after I graduated from Miami University in the spring of 1987. A liberal arts major with poor grades, I couldn't maintain a set of accounting books, design hair dryers, or trade commodities. The help wanted ads didn't look very promising. There was a large demand for nurses, engineers, cost accountants, security guards, and little else. None of it interested me in the least, but I had to apply for something.

A few small-to-medium-sized factories were advertising for unskilled laborers, and I certainly fit the bill. After I failed to get a job by applying with them directly, a "friend" suggested checking out temporary agencies. Another "friend" referred me to Olson Temporary Services, claiming it has the "best" assignments. Olson had placed his girlfriend at General Electric's jet engine plant in Cincinnati and she ended up getting into GE's executive management

Like most factories, Avon's workforce was composed of two classes: the non-productive managerial and clerk class, most of whom dressed like appliance salespersons at Sears, and the workers, many also non-productive, who dressed like people who purchase appliances at Sears.

trainee program. I didn't believe I was capable of landing such a position owing to a basic defect of character—a complete lack of the work ethic, at least a positive one. But at this point, anything would do.

The nearest Olson office was in Fairfield, a Cincinnati suburb in the Forest Fair Mall, the largest mall in the United States, probably containing almost as much concrete as the Hoover Dam. A monument to consumer excess, its developer went belly up and wrote off

\$1.5 billion-worth of junk bonds that had been used to finance its construction on a couple hundred acres of former corn and soybean fields. Its combination of highly polished marble, loud, abrasive music, and flashing lights had given half a dozen children epileptic fits.

Forest Fair Mall is Fairfield's largest minimum-wage employer, and Olson Temporary Services is strategically placed within it, right between the Jiffy Lube and the State Farm Insurance office. The mall's architectural style is "lowest common denominator"—as uninspiring as possible, particularly if thirty cents can be saved, and Olson's office is a perfect example of it. When I walked through Olson's door, I noticed a small waiting area with eight people in the typical uncomfortable plastic chairs. A few of their occupants were leafing absentmindedly through *People* and *Reader's Digest*; some just stared out into space with dead chicken eyes. My three-hour wait was thoroughly horrible. Making people wait needlessly is the petty bureaucrat's means of exerting a modicum of authority over the powerless.

Although I passed the basic skills and word processing tests Olson gave me, they didn't have an immediate job assignment, and told me to call the next day to check for openings. Being anxious to get out of the Olson office, I played the obedient, ignorant worker and left without asking any questions. This was neither the time nor the place to be antagonistic. That would come later.

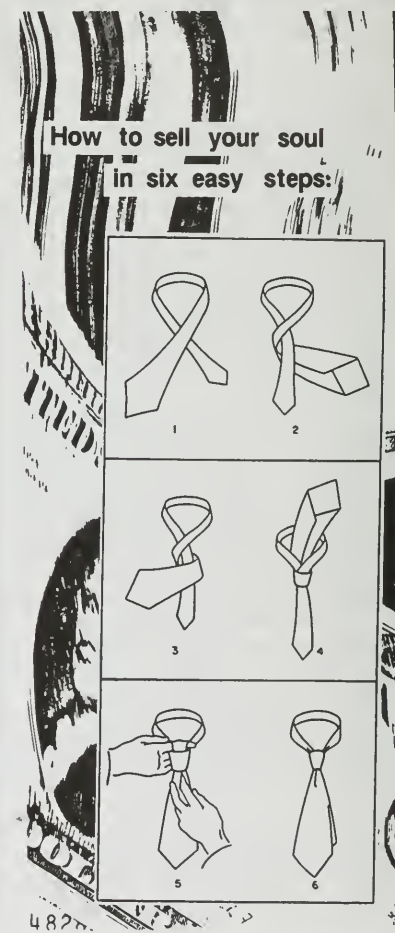
Following my instructions to the letter, I called Olson at around 2:30 the following afternoon. After being on hold for half an eternity, subjected to the drone of a "light rock" station, a human voice informed me of a potential assignment at a nearby Avon cosmetics factory. The assignment would last for two to three weeks, and I was informed that it was considered "choice" because it didn't require you to wear a hard hat and steel-toed shoes. I accepted the assignment, which was to begin the next Monday, giving me one last weekend of freedom.

Not knowing what the early morning traffic would be like, I allowed plenty of

time to arrive at the factory that Monday. Olson had stressed showing up fifteen minutes early to convey a "positive attitude." As I headed toward the factory, the gray-toned cover of early dawn prevented me from getting a very good look at the other drivers barreling down the expressway. They all looked the same: silhouettes taking gulps of coffee from spill-proof containers, looking for another radio station or just staring ahead while negotiating the umbilical cord between home and job. Humans are alone when they're born and when they die, and also when they drive to work at 5:40 Monday morning.

The Avon factory sat on an expansive plot of land skirting two major interstates. It looked more like a vast office complex than the traditional factory replete with smokestacks and water towers. Of course, most funeral homes also conceal what actually goes on behind their closed doors.

The parking lot was already quite full when I arrived, with newer cars safe-



graphic by deuce of clubs

guarded in its outer periphery to prevent being scratched and bumped by the many don't-give-a-damn jalopies parked closer to the employee entrance. Probably half of many employees' weekly earnings went out the exhaust pipe of monthly car loan payments and repair bills. Which comes first—the job that necessitates having the car or the car that necessitates having the job? Either way, it's a vicious circle.

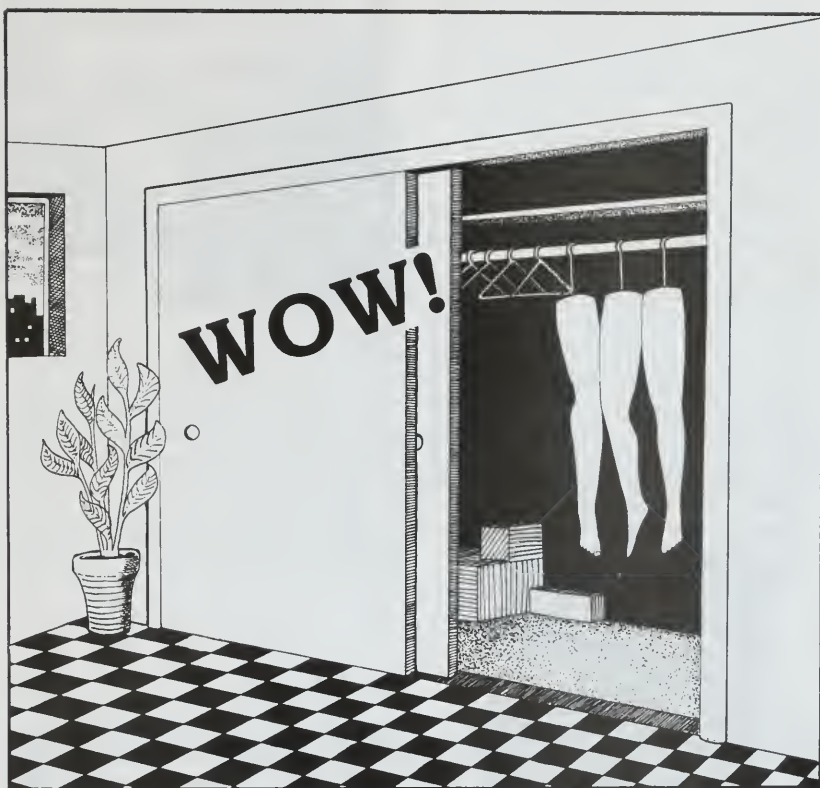
By this time, the sun was on the job, turning shades of gray into colors. As I parked my car I could see the faces of the people sitting in the relative safety of their cars, savoring those last few minutes of freedom. Not knowing where to report, I followed the herd heading toward an entrance, hoping to figure things out without having to ask questions. Like most factories, Avon's workforce was composed of two classes: the non-productive managerial and clerk class, most of whom dressed like appliance salespersons at Sears, and the workers, many also non-productive, who dressed like people who purchase appliances at Sears. Taking note of a few other confused people congregated around the security desk, I went over to try to glean some information from listening to their questions. One of the disinterested guards told a confused temp to sign in and take an identity badge, to be worn "in a prominent place" whenever on the factory floor.

On my way to the assigned break area where the temporary employee orientation was to be given, I took a long look at the factory floor. It was clean, well-ventilated, and amply lit. Its large south-facing window overlooked a well-manicured lawn. Avon certainly defied the factory stereotype.

It was early October, and a production increase was in the works to meet the large influx of orders expected from Avon's legion of salespeople. From a business standpoint, hiring temporary workers to meet peak production needs makes perfect business sense—after all, temps receive rock-bottom wages and marginal benefits, if any. With that attitude, it should have been no surprise when most personnel departments changed their names to Human Resources.

Early in the history of this "modern" factory, the workforce went on a long and bitter strike that cost Avon a lot of money and taught its management the importance of minimizing the possibility of future strikes. Central to this new managerial philosophy was the replace-

THERE'S NO LEGS LIKE SINGAPORE LEGS!



graphic by S. Denney/C.C.

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ment of tenured employees with a large pool of temps who would be trained to perform an elementary assembly line function in less than fifteen minutes—and summarily dismissed if they ever questioned the status quo. The remaining tenured employees were, in the meantime, pacified into a state of bovine docility and quite frankly didn't give a hoot in hell how the temps were treated.

A group of twenty to thirty temps sat or stood around, nervously spouting the mindless chatter of parrots or appliance salesmen at Sears. Many of them knew one another, having worked together on other temporary jobs in the past. Others, such as myself, didn't know anyone and just stood around looking as dumb as the machines to which we would soon be chained.

Everyone shut up as soon as two official-looking women walked into the break area. The first was frumpy and well into middle age, probably a com-

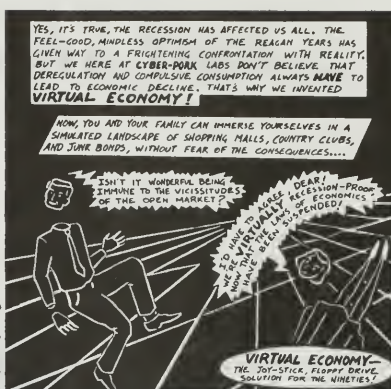
pany person who'd worked her way up through the ranks. Walking a few feet behind was a substantially younger woman who, while looking just as official (i.e., hollow-eyed and mannequin-faced), possessed the body of an aerobics fanatic who lived on yogurt and diet sodas. Her face was much more taut than that of the marshmallow-complexioned woman in front. I could tell immediately that the young woman was all business and saw her current position as a necessary evil to be tolerated only until something better came along. The older woman probably looked upon her current position as a career pinnacle, the fruit of twenty-five years with the company, something to brag about during Saturday morning appointments with the beautician.

The employee orientation was conducted on much the same infantile level as the one at Olson: very structured, very authoritarian, and very boring. Among the items stressed was the need

to sign in and out at both the guard station and supervisor's desk, to promptly return from breaks, and to display a positive attitude at all times owing to the large number of "dignitaries" who tour the factory on a daily basis. The orientation broke up after fifteen minutes, and we were split up into teams of five temps each.

After fifteen minutes of "training," my team was assigned to a machine that was operated by a tenured employee behind a control console and watched over by a machine repairman. Our job involved snapping one plastic piece onto another as it passed our respective work stations on a conveyor belt to another temp who neatly arranged them in boxes. The assembly involved a simple pump that would eventually be attached to a perfume bottle on another assembly line. A

graphic by Hugh D'Andrade



five minutes. I too was less than eager to return to that godforsaken assembly line, which was now being speeded up to a minimally acceptable production speed.

In front of each of the nine assembly lines was a desk. Behind each desk was a machine supervisor, whose job it was to see that production quotas and quality control standards were met. As long as everything was within acceptable production ranges, they didn't have to do very much, and indeed didn't do much besides standing around trying to look necessary. They didn't convince me. Sure, one of them would take periodic walks around the line, write on a clipboard, and occasionally inquire how everything was going. I wasn't asked, but wouldn't have told the truth anyway; they didn't want to hear anything other than "OK."

By 1:30 I was working like a robot and paying no attention to the quality of my workmanship. Quality control was a luxury I hadn't the time or inclination to engage in. Frankly, I displayed the finesse of a drunken Russian coal miner. If the correct fitting was made, OK; if the incorrect fitting was made, OK.

With the buzzing of the end-of-shift signal, both tenured and temporary employees dropped everything and dashed for the exits with a reason for living that they otherwise lacked during the course of the working day. While leaving the Avon factory did signal the attainment of a degree of freedom, it also meant driving through bumper-to-bumper traffic, preparing the evening meal, washing dishes, taking children to sports practice, watching four to six hours of television, thinking about sex—maybe even going through the motions—and falling asleep on the couch by 10:00. By 9:30, I was thoroughly lost in dreamless slumber land.

Morning came around in much the same way it had twenty-four hours earlier, only I was more tired, two cups of jet black coffee notwithstanding. Arriving five minutes later than yesterday forced me to park further back in the parking lot and walk what seemed like half a mile to the employee entrance. As for my state of mind, I didn't really have one the second day, most of which was spent filling boxes with shampoo bottles and jars of facial cream coming off a conveyor belt with the velocity of machine gun bullets. Falling behind within fifteen minutes of the beginning of my shift necessitated work-

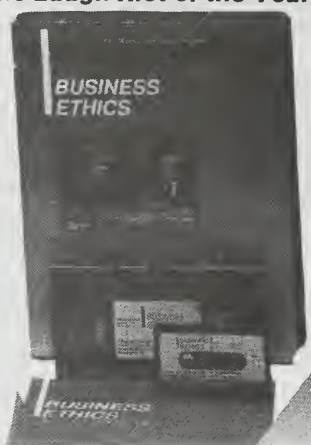
highly indifferent, late-middle-aged woman controlled the assembly line's speed and initially kept it down to what was considered an inefficient pace while the temps acquired the basic rote skills and machine-like rhythms to accomplish the task at hand.

After less than five minutes, it was painfully boring and I was looking for a clock to mark the time until the first break, still two and a half hours away. The two temps sitting on either side of me were engaged in some inane conversation through which they could perhaps make things go by more quickly. They covered such well-worn topics as missed daytime dramas, planned shopping excursions on the upcoming weekend, and anticipated purchases from the Avon Employee Store.

In spite of the finite nature of such conversational topics, they were able to sustain their chitter-chatter for a full two-and-a-half hours until the final break, somewhere around 10:30, although I had completely lost track of empirical time. The temps sitting in the break area closest to my assembly line were acting like shell-shocked soldiers. The tenured employees didn't look any better, and in fact, looked shell-shocked all the time—both on and off the job. While earning almost double per hour what the temps earned and having slightly better jobs, they had the distinct disadvantage of having done it for years if not decades and wore the effects like fashion models wear skin-tight clothes: puffy faces, cream-cheese complexions, raccoon-like rings around oil-slick eyes, atrophied muscles, poor posture, deformed hands.

The temps returned from the break with the reluctance of cattle being herded into a slaughterhouse killing line. The tenured employees who knew what was in store were the last to come back, extending the break for another

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ing like mad to avoid being the “weak link” in the chain. I shouldn’t have given a damn, but did—a major character flaw I hope to eliminate soon.

This was only Tuesday morning, but the concept of weekends had lost its significance in my struggle to keep up with the mechanized beast. Unlike the two assembly lines flanking the one I was bound to, mine wasn’t breaking down very frequently; it just kept on going. The two temps working near me had long since ceased talking and instead just concentrated on the task at hand, trying to survive until the next break. By quitting time I knew why Fred Flintstone shouted “Yabba Dabba Doo!” when his shift ended and he could get away from his drudgery.

Once home, riding my bike was still possible, but I mostly thought about the job while biking and didn’t really enjoy myself. Reading was entirely out of the question. Watching television was stretching my capabilities, but was made possible by having a remote control unit within arm’s reach. I fell asleep by 9:00; my night was once again dreamless.

Early Wednesday morning, while assembling lunch (the food in the Avon cafeteria was truly wretched) and dreading my appointment with yet another machine, I realized that this couldn’t go on much longer if my sanity were to be preserved. At the same time, however, the alternatives seemed to be equally unattractive. There was really only one alternative—another shit job.

Wednesday morning actually started out OK, because I was pulled away from the assembly line and assigned to help a tenured employee construct boxes. The machine had broken down, and she told me to just act like I was working in the meantime. My holiday lasted until the first break, after which I was chained to the machine for which I had previously constructed boxes. This new job involved screwing lids onto jars of cold cream. It was another situation in which I immediately fell behind and had to bust ass to avoid falling behind even further. As luck would have it, the machine broke down again when one of the jars got caught in a chute and created a substantial traffic jam. After carefully listening to the repairman explain to the machine operator why the jam occurred, I made a mental note of his instructions.

Only then did I notice the sexual composition of the factory floor’s two job

classifications: repair (men) and operations (women). Because being a repairman was deemed more “difficult,” they were paid more than operators, who, while earning more than the temps, earned about one-third less than the repairmen. The supervisors were predominantly female, but earned little more than the repairmen, who mainly stood around drinking coffee and making sexist remarks.

Once the machine was unclogged, it ran smoothly—except when I sabotaged it by creating a jam. But this provided only the most temporary relief. I could only break the machine down for about 15 minutes an hour without giving myself away to management; this meant having to work for 45 minutes an hour, which was intolerable as far as I was concerned. So as soon as the half-hour lunch break began, I casually gathered up my jacket and bag and took one last look around the place. There was really no need to sign out. I didn’t believe I’d

get paid by Olson anyway owing to some silly breach of contract clause in the employment forms. So be it!

The first object I noticed upon getting out of Avon was an enormous oak tree towering over the parking lot. Perfectly proportioned, it must have been seventy years old and possessed a dignity denied to the people bound to the hum-drum life inside. I marveled that it hadn’t been bulldozed during the construction of the parking lot, probably a concession to ’70s environmentalists designed to project a “good corporate image” while Avon’s products filled up landfills across the nation and much of the ocean floor off the New Jersey coast.

As I walked towards my car, granted, I had almost no money and few prospects for getting any in the near future, but I was free for the afternoon—and that was enough for the time being.

—Donald Phillips

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REMEMBER — OBEDIENCE IS NINE TENTHS OF THE LAW!

RUSTBELT ARCHIPELAGO

As the dust of the so-called collapse of communism settles, it's become clear that this is only one of international capitalism's minor adjustments. The last living myth after the death of socialism is the Free Market, or as it is more popularly known, The Economy. State-Taylorism in the East and Post-Fordism in the West are looking for new ways to tap people's social productivity, their natural ability to work together to produce for themselves. It no longer makes sense to call this situation a "crisis" — capitalism is always in crisis. By its very nature, capitalism is a clumsy, precarious way of transforming people's natural social productivity into work and the conditions that ensure more work.

The transformations of "Eastern capitalism" reveal the relationship between capital and social productivity quite clearly. The stagnation of state-capitalism under Brezhnev was mainly caused by the rampant "exploitation" of capitalist structures by the workers. The Soviet factory had many uses and was extremely productive but unfortunately wasn't profitable. The buildings provided shelter during the day and at night, as well as space for conversations, private tinkering, card games, and so forth. Factories organized food distribution through barter deals with agricultural enterprises (no lines required). They guaranteed medical services, cheap vacations, and child care. The factory itself was a source of materials for private barter deals (theft). These functions were only slightly disturbed by market-oriented production, which consumed about 10 hours a week of each worker's time.

In fact, the factory was not a strictly market-oriented enterprise but an ex-

tended collective household with the typically high productivity that households have always had. (Especially in agriculture: 50% of all Soviet food was allegedly produced on 2% of all Soviet farmland—the "private" patches owned by agricultural workers.) However, the full use of this productive capacity was hindered by the stranglehold of the Communist Party and state bureaucracy—the only real capitalist structures. Maintaining a tightly knit workforce surveillance network absorbed huge amounts of productive capacity and was immensely demoralizing. And compared to control by the money system, it was so ridiculously expensive and ineffective that its prolonged existence can be considered one of the "economic miracles of socialism"—no other system could have afforded so many idle members.

"Socialism" was a deal with capital, but never a workers' paradise. If the Soviet workers could have gotten rid of this repressive grid, its "productivity" might easily have risen tenfold.

The current adjustments demonstrate that by the end of the '80s, even the Communist Party's extremely terroristic and debilitating regime was unable to extract sufficient surplus out of an expanding "swamp" of direct appropriation. The proletariat had become dangerously concrete, surviving in spite of

"Socialism" was a deal with capital, but never a workers' paradise . . . To stop a proletariat that wasn't controlled by the Party (the real equivalent of money), that had not yet submitted to monetary circuits, and that would suddenly have been one of the richest and happiest on the planet, only a radical international emergency program would do.

the collapse of gross national output and smelling the immense possibilities at its own disposal once it could pry the bureaucratic lid off the pot. Into this miasma of theft, corruption, shadow "economy," "stagnation," and "Brezhnevism" (Brezhnev takes the credit without deserving it!), the authorities aimed the light of *glasnost* (Russian for transparency) and *perestroika* (getting the households out of the factories). From the perspective of the world market (and the communists have always operated from this perspective, beginning with Lenin's "Taylorist" coup d'état), an incompetent, overpaid, and socially "entangled" generation of old executives had to be replaced by a sharper crew that would dare to cut into social productivity with tougher instruments.

The Soviet Union was certainly a capitalist society, but not run on money (only its overall output for the world market was monetized, as the big multinationals do). To stop a proletariat that wasn't controlled by the Party (the real equivalent of money), that had not yet submitted to monetary circuits, and that would suddenly have been one of the richest and happiest on the planet, only a radical international emergency program would do. The bureaucracy sabotages productivity for the workers' use wherever possible and then proposes the "free market," with the most dedicated of the workers as the new capitalists, as the only salvation. For example, there has never been and there is no food shortage in the ex-Soviet Union, but all the old channels of distribution have been blocked by the bureaucracy. The drying out of the swamp is a necessary first step in the introduction of a system in which a direct connection between work and living is made via real money (U.S. dollars, at the moment). Russian workers cannot pay for their living by working 10 easy-going hours a week and expect to compete with world-market levels of productivity like those of Taiwan or Japan.

A monthly wage in the former Soviet Union is now about \$12. How rich must a society be if it can keep its members alive, even on the most miserable terms, for \$12 a month! There must still be reserves of "hidden" productivity! What



graphic by Angela Bocage

we observe at this moment is a desperate race between the Russian proletariat reconstructing and rediscovering its productivity on a new basis and international capital creating an archipelago of (initially subsidized) full-time capitalist production to exploit their productivity. The problem is that because of active sabotage by the old bureaucracy, most factories cannot be centers of social productivity any more without specific efforts to make them useful to the market again. Russian households are extremely poor, small, and vulnerable, and even less productive than ours. The Leninist "deal" consisted of "giving"

the Russian proletariat the factory, but "taking" the "village" (*obshchina*) away. A Russian factory always looked like and operated like a traditional village community. If you now take the factory away, the Russian workers are in a real squeeze. They'll be out in the open, ready to accept any deal. This, of course, is what "international aid" means.

If only an attack on the Russian proletariat were on the agenda, international capital wouldn't make more of a fuss than in past decades. But the dismantling of the Russian workers' power base correlates with decisive "ad-

justments" in the West. Although there is a lot of social productivity ready for market exploitation in the East, it has vanished or become inexploitable in the West. This productivity is one of use values and is objectively "high" when everybody feels "comfortable." It can be high in a technically and energetically simple community like the South Sea islands, and low in the housing projects of the most sophisticated capitalist systems. Even in an advanced capitalist society, the social productivity is always predominant, and must be. Simple calculations of hours worked in the extremely crippled 2.5-person U.S.

household show that 50% of the work is done within it. Add services and deals among friends, invitations, small vegetable gardening, consumption on farms, gifts, the shadow economy, spontaneous cooperation in the workplace, unpaid union and party meetings, midnight notes and so on, and you can easily see that capital can only exist if most of the work—even on the job—isn't regularly accounted for. Capital feeds on the "social body" like a leech on a water buffalo. The subversive/instructive sense of a slogan like "Wages for housework" is based on this fact.

Actually, if you look at use values, capitalism is one of the crudest and most wasteful and brutish attempts to make a living (and it has nothing to do with the desire to make a living, either). It could only survive because the worldwide level of spontaneous production was so immensely high that only the dumbest took capitalism seriously. Especially what we call the Third World was such an inexhaustible reservoir of human and cultural resources that the capitalist nonsense experiment could be looked at with a contemptuous smile. It accounted for maybe 10% of real human dealings on the planet (wage labor).

Now this is over. People are seriously impatient with capital almost everywhere. Two hundred years of continuous exploitation and sabotage of social productivity have put us and capital in a squeeze. In the West, for example, the reproductive capacity of households has been damaged to such an extent that capital must pay more for the upkeep of the workers than it can profitably afford.

The "social costs" (caused by capital's own ferocious work rhythms), the repair bills for the profit-generators, have risen so high that the required wage would reduce profits to below bearable limits. The capitalization of real estate made housing costs rise. Health care, pensions, child-rearing costs including education, etc., have made industrial production unprofitable in the old capitalist zones. Workers don't work enough and live too long—they aren't "just in time" like other factors of production. Only where the hinterlands supply cheap, fresh workers and provide accessible dumping grounds (East Asia) can material goods still be produced. Only where workers come "for free" can capital exist. *Even if we work full time and pay for everything, we cost too much.*

But what if our social costs could be reduced to those of the new arrivals from Russia and other points abroad? In a certain sense, cheap socialist workers are already competing with expensive western workers, although the factories they will work in have not yet been built. One of the mechanisms is the transfer of capital: huge masses of money are invested in the special economic zones in the East (not all of the ex-Soviet Union can be made profitable), emptying the credit-markets in the West and thus pushing interest rates up. The "softest" western companies then go bankrupt, unemployment rises, and workers become cheaper. Rents, linked to interest rates, rise and skim away 30% of a wage versus maybe 20% a few years ago. Inflation without compensation does the rest. At the same

time, government's purse strings are tied and capital pays less into the common social pool. Reductions of social costs via wage cuts or state budget cuts have been under way in the West for some years now. There are cheaper workers available.

It would be easy for capital to revive social productivity even in the West and get potentially cheaper workers. A 2.5-person household is very expensive and desperately unproductive. It seems that the highest social productivity is possible in a village-like, well-structured, "democratic" community of about 500 people. Living in such units could reduce social costs by as much as 80%. Capital would be happy to get workers at such a price; however, the problem is that such communities develop high levels of political power and independence and their members usually can't understand why they should work at all and pay so much. *They become cheap but useless.* To get them back to work, you need pure pre-capitalist terror (money alone or even the Chicago Boys won't do the job.).

In part, this will be one of capital's roadblocks in the East. And it could be the starting point of our reflections on how to ruin capital's newest and most global readjustment so far. The geographical area where most of the readjustments will happen is the Rustbelt. It stretches from Northern California across Detroit, New Jersey, New England, Old England, and Middle Europe, along the Trans-Siberian railroad and into parts of China and even Japan (Japan's been aging lately, too). If we look at the planet this way, we can forget the old ideological myths of Eastern and Western blocs and national boundaries and just see empty industrial areas with groups of workers in different but interdependent squeezes, with different experiences involving struggle, machinery, bureaucrats, and "corruption" (i.e., social productivity). We recognize that life in this zone of destruction, roughly between 30 and 60 degrees of latitude North, could still be possible without further disturbing the South. Of course our criteria would be different from those of the current capitalist renovators. Although we don't exactly love factories, even less rusty ones, and there is massive pollution in some of these areas, they represent a common possibility for action. They're empty and can be invaded and recycled. Workers are skilled in how to use them. The real



graphic by Angela Bocage



graphic by Angela Bocage

estate they sit on is mostly cheap, and the areas are centrally located and linked to railroads. Spaces are big and often ideal for communal structures.

Instead of following capital's ambiguous offers of emigration, we could emigrate collectively into these spaces and link them to a kind of Rustbelt Archipelago. Then all workers would be able to travel around the planet from social factory to social factory without serving in capital's army of wage-undercutters. Instead, they'd always be coming home.

The Economy tries to impose conditions on us that combine the worst of both worlds—eastern wages and western work discipline. The answer to this is worldwide collaboration on the common project of producing for ourselves. Although we have better equipment than the Russians, they could teach us how to use factories in other ways. In creating the new industrial villages of the Rustbelt, we need all the social and technical know-how we can get.

Of course, because food distribution is one of the instruments of political repression and social sabotage, we must also connect these Rust Spots with the surrounding farmland. Without direct control over food-production, the capitalist "joke" will never end. (Supermarkets are ridiculous!)

There is immense power and pleasure in social productivity controlled by the proletariat, or just people once you get rid of capital's criteria, and now is the moment to organize the struggle for it. Periods of adjustment are always risky for capital. There are "leaks" now, soft

spots, and reasonable proposals that could help to put imagination on dangerous paths to action.

In a larger context, the transformation of the Rustbelt into a kind of Archipelago Pandora could end 5,000 years of patriarchal anomaly and neutralize the Northern domination of the Southern Hemisphere. Mining the Rustbelt can only be one aspect in the struggle against the patriarchal planetary Work Machine, but from the point of view of practical opportunity, it could be a viable first step in this big task.

The Rustbelt movement is just one aspect of the planetary struggle against the stranglehold of capital. Cooperation with all movements throughout the world is crucial, but especially with the Southern Hemisphere (there are lots of rusty spots there too). The need for such cooperation transcends all barriers of race, color, income, sex, and nationality.

Why not use industrial areas in the context of movements that fight for other than economic solutions to life? In many urban areas such movements are looking for spaces to meet, organize, and test new lifestyles. At the same time, there is an immense lack of housing space for the homeless, migrants, young people and the victims of the present crisis in general. Huge office buildings, assembly-line halls, warehouses, storage areas, port facilities are theoretically available now everywhere, and capitalist planners can't offer profitable proposals for their reuse. What we propose is a transcontinental movement that appropriates these spaces and uses

them as bases for a new, matriarchal civilization.

- Focus on three concrete projects, ideally one in the R.S.A. (Rusty State of Amnesia), one in Middle Eurusty, and one in the ex-Rust Union.

- Create schemes for appropriating industrial areas: squatting, creating state subsidized housing, forming cooperatives or public corporations.

- Disseminate existing knowledge regarding the re-use of industrial areas.

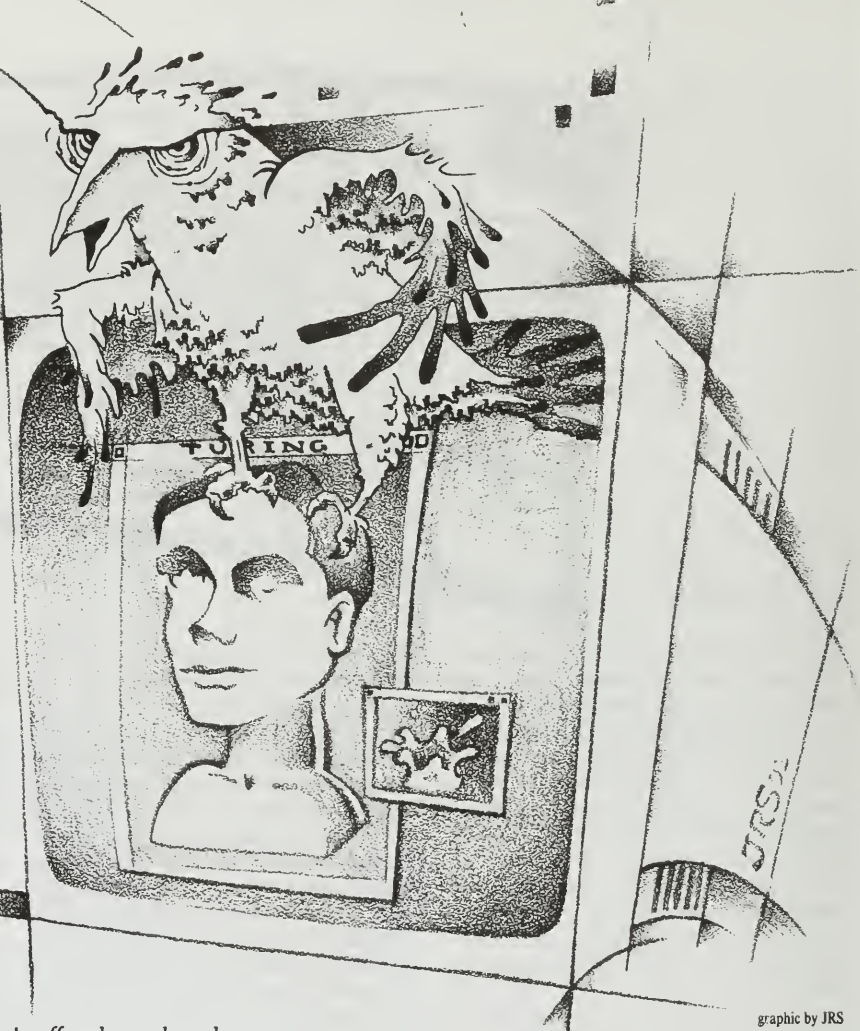
**WORKERS OF THE RUSTBELT,
UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO
LOSE BUT YOUR JOBS!**

—P.M., Zurich, Switzerland



graphic by Angela Bocage

R A V I N'

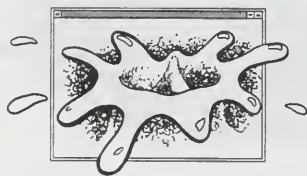


graphic by JRS

Once upon a midnight bleary, while I suffered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious program hacked of yore --
While I nodded, nearly sleeping, suddenly there came a beeping,
As of something creeping, softly creeping, near my disk drive door.
"Tis some malfunction," said I, "beeping at my disk drive door --
Only this, and nothing more."

Yet the silken, sad, unrolling of each screen of code downscrolling
Thrilled me -- filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"Tis some hardware error clattering at my disk drive door --
Some errant bug creating an annoyance at my disk drive door --
That it is, and nothing more."

Deep into directories peering, long I sat there, wondering, fearing
Dreaming, doubting doubts no mortal ever dared to doubt before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the single word there spoken was a whispered "Gremlins!"
This I whispered, and an echo whisp'ring answered, "Gremlins!"
Merely this, and nothing more.



Back unto my keyboard turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a beeping, somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something in the tape drive;
Let me see, then, what thetreat is, and this mystery explore --
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore --
'Tis a bug and nothing more."

Swiftly I accessed the backup, when, with many a fart and hiccup,
 There wafted out some flakey Ravin' from the mystic days of yore;
 Not a clue as to who'd made it; no Escape key stopped or stayed it,
 But, determined to invade, it perched above my disk drive door --
 Upon a virtual bust of Turing just above my disk drive door --
 Perched, and shat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony doofus jiggling my sad fancy into giggling,
 By the cruffy cartoon crudeness of the countenance it wore,
 "Though thy resolution's murky and thy animation's jerky,"
 Said I, "Grim and ancient Ravin' floating from this frightful bore --
 Tell me, tell me thy full pathname in the system's hallowed store!"
 Croaked the Ravin': "NEVERMORE."

Much I marveled this ungainly hack to synthesize so plainly,
 Though its answer little meaning -- little relevance bore;
 For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
 Ever yet was cursed with seeing such an image 'bove his door --
 Glitch or bug upon the windowed screen above his disk drive door.
 A software error -- nothing more.

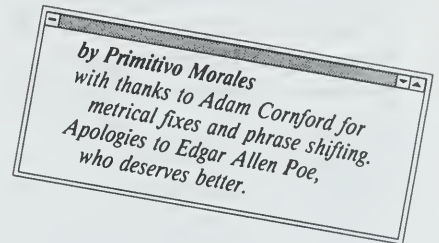
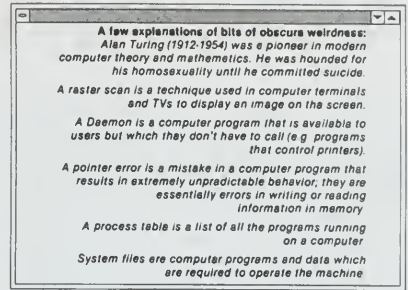
But the Ravin', spouting lonely from the placid bust, spoke only
 That one phrase, as if its soul therein it did outpour.
 Nothing further then it uttered -- not a raster then it fluttered --
 Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other bugs have flown before --
 On the morrow this will leave me, as such code has flown before."
 "FATAL ERROR: CAN'T RESTORE."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
 "Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store
 First repeated and repeated as some dweeb trying to delete it
 Was defeated and defeated till his songs one burden bore --
 Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore
 Of 'ABORT, OR RETRY, OR IGNORE!'"

Now the Ravin' was befouling my glad fancy into scowling,
 Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of screen and bust and door;
 Then, upon the dacton sinking, I betook myself to linking
 Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous fraud of yore --
 What this grim, ungainly, gnarly, gross, and gubbish fraud of yore
 Meant in grunting "DUMP THE CORE!"

"Prophet!" said I, "Thing of evil! -- prophet still, if bug or daemon! --
 Whether programmed, or a terror grown from unknown pointer error,
 Freak, undocumented, in this office unenchanted --
 In this shop by deadlines haunted -- tell me truly, I implore --
 Does this --- does this machina hold a deus? -- tell me, I implore!"
 "DEAD LABOR -- NOTHING MORE."

"Be that phrase our sign of parting, bug or fiend," I shrieked, upstarting --
 "Get thee from my process table, and my system files restore!
 Leave no icon as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
 Leave my loneliness unbroken! -- Quit the bust above my door!
 Take thy beak from off my screen, and take thy code from out my core!"
 Croaked it: "RUNTIME ERROR 104."



WHAT WORK MATTERS?

The Labor Movement has stopped moving. Institutions, primarily AFL-CIO trade unions, long ago replaced workers as the “active” part of the “movement.” In the past two decades unions and organized workers have been completely outflanked by the widespread restructuring of work through automation and relocation. This institutional legacy of earlier struggles is incapable of reconceptualizing the nature of social opposition; to expect otherwise is naïve.

What do we want and how do we get it?

We want to take back our labor. It's ours, and we want to decide what society does! It is strategically disempowering—dare I say “stupid”—to begin from the premise that our revolutionary activity must rest on our subordinate positions. Trying to get improved wages or conditions within an absurd, toxic and wasteful division of labor over which no one has any meaningful control is to pursue a future of childlike dependence on either rulers or the abstraction known as The Economy. What is The Economy? It is all of us doing all this work—a lot of it a waste of time! But the media tells a different story: we are chided for lacking “consumer confidence” and scolded for “hurting The Economy,” or perhaps we are counseled that “it's bad right now,” as though The Economy was suffering a transient medical problem that will pass just like a cold.

Government as we know it is a major part of the problem, not because it stands in the way of business and the market, but because it offers them the ultimate guarantee of force, and has proven its willingness to act. Unions are also part of this. They have clear legal responsibilities, primarily negotiating and upholding legal contracts with large companies, ensuring “labor peace”; they cling to the law, hoping that eventually the government will change the laws and then enforce them to allow a new wave

of unionization. They imagine that they will someday be allowed back in the club and once again enjoy a piece of an expanding economic pie as they did during the post-war period, when they played an important role in crafting U.S. foreign and domestic policies by purging radicals and communists and becoming ardent cold warriors.

Labor-management cooperation succeeds when there is increasing wealth to divide up at the bargaining table, and workers are content to exchange control over their work for increased purchasing power. Those days are gone forever. The U.S.'s much-vaunted “high standard of living”—the trough at which trade unionism has fed its formerly fat face so voraciously—is sinking fast.

Falling living standards are no accident. The effect of expanding international trade is to gradually equalize wages and working conditions worldwide. The demise of union strength, attributable in part to the emergence of this world market with its billions of low-wage workers, is also in part a result of unions themselves. Union bureau-

crats who have helped pursue the imperialist policies of the U.S. through the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) and campaigns for “democratic unions” have contributed to a process which has already greatly increased “Third World” conditions in U.S. cities.

The reduction of high-wage industrial work in favor of low-wage, part-time service and information work was in response to the equalizing forces of the world market. As capital flows to areas of optimal profitability, living conditions worsen in its wake, creating a two-tiered society that signals misery for the majority. It is a process that cannot be derailed by an “honest” or even “progressive” government enmeshed in the unforgiving world market. Union leaders who campaign for “jobs” are either cynics or genuinely myopic. They know as well as anyone who reads the daily papers that the wave of restructuring that helped produce this “downturn in The Economy” has permanently reduced the number of workers needed.

Today people band together as work-

A trail of theft, protection rackets and sordid corruption—the droppings of the job market pimps known as “official unionists”—led to a ghoulish cul-de-sac:

THE HAUNTED HOUSE OF LABOR



graphics by Son of Sam (Gompertz)



They had made a perfidious pact with the EVIL ONES!...

ers and take action when they are attacked and enraged, or desperately frightened (and not always then). By the time they are pushed to this extreme, a large team of lawyers and managers has already been planning for months or years on using management's strategic power to increase control and profits. Workers' actions under union (and legal) control invariably correspond closely to the script being written by the company lawyers.

Of course no one expects radical ideas from union leaders, whose primary concerns are personal survival, pensions, their kids' college tuitions, etc. As every wave of layoffs, automation and concessions hurls more people into the daily transience and uncertainty that increasingly characterize daily life in the U.S., union bureaucrats merely seek long-term guarantees for themselves as institutional players at the Table of Consensus. Any contract will do, as long as the dues keep getting checked off. Maybe they'll have to "tighten their belts," lay off a secretary or two.

For these reasons a new wave of social opposition must identify its strategic concerns as distinct from those of unions. Those that do the work should assume comprehensive control, through their own activity, of their (our) work, their purposes, and organization. Workers have to begin thinking beyond the logic of the system in which they find themselves entrapped.

Time at the paid job is akin to "jail" versus the "freedom" of time after work.

Work is war. If it's only a game now, it's because it's so difficult to seriously challenge the power and designs of the owners and their representatives.

Many people already pursue activities and "work" that they rarely, if ever, get paid for. In spite of the lack of "demand" for this "work," they put serious committed energy into developing various talents, skills, or tendencies because their engagement with life demands it—the satisfaction of their full humanity depends on it! What if the passion that leads us to become musicians or artists, or to pursue "second careers," or "pay our dues" in the fields we are interested in, were unleashed to redesign life itself?!

As the people who "have better things to do than work," we have to develop our sense of self-interest, in stark opposition to the consensus for a "strong economy." Tactics to expand our freedom RIGHT NOW will become clearer

collective appropriation of the means of production. In other words, "taking over" this messed-up world and running it "democratically" is neither truly possible nor desirable. A more thoroughgoing transformation of human activity and society will be required. To look at institutional solutions at the state level or its opposite, is to gaze into the past. Those ideas were born embedded in a division of labor and social system that has consistently promoted extreme centralization, stratification, and hierarchy based on power, wealth, race and gender.

If it is hopelessly anachronistic to believe in the possibility of One Big Union, or even a good government, how do we democratically organize our lives? What does democratic organization really mean? How come when we "talk politics" we don't talk about real issues like what do we do and why? How can we "freely participate" in a system of

The target of a new social opposition should be a good life for everyone. An ecologically sound material abundance, based on non-mandatory but widely shared short work shifts at democratically determined "necessary labor," is possible right now!

as we share what we already know about points of vulnerability, openings and spaces, creative obfuscation, unfettered self-expression, utopian fantasizing, and *living well now*. Sometimes we'll find allies at work, other times the pursuit of our goals may need "outside help."

Given the sweeping changes of the past two decades (computerization and just-in-time production to name but two examples), the fear of losing increasingly scarce jobs, and the thorough amnesia that afflicts U.S. workers, liberals, and even radicals, it seems unlikely that social movements that break with the logic of the marketplace will arise *on the job*. However, such movements will still face the question of work.

THE DUALISM OF WORK

The French writer Andre Gorz has argued that the extreme socialization of modern industry and its reduction of human labor to completely controlled machine-like behavior has eliminated the once radical vision of true workers' control of industry and society. The way most work is structured in the global factory precludes the possibility of a

highly socialized labor and creatively redesign the fabric of our lives at the same time?

The marketplace and wage-labor impose a fatal break between our inclinations and duties. We are objects cast about in the rough seas of the market,

What can you say about people who's motto is: "Proud To Be An Office Worker"?



These ghoulish workerists attempted to pass themselves as living humans!



rather than thoughtful subjects considering the zillions of ways in which our lives could be better immediately, and organizing ourselves to help bring it about. We are locked into "careers," or perhaps vicious cycles of underemployment, unemployment and bad luck, instead of choosing from a smorgasbord of useful activities needing attention, from cooking, cleaning and caretaking, to planting and building, along with a variety of well-stocked workshops for easy "self-production" of essential items.

Why isn't it a common discussion among people that life is so dismal when it could be so fine?

Perhaps we can get something from Gorz's concept of dualism at work. It's a dualism we already face, but relatively unconsciously. On the one hand, there are certain basic tasks that must be done "efficiently" to accommodate basic human needs worldwide—clean water and sewage treatment, sustainable agriculture, adequate shelter and clothing, and so on. On the other, are the countless ways humans have developed to satisfy themselves and improve life, from culture and music to home improvements and do-it-yourself-ism. In today's society, this dualism is experienced as an unavoidable division between what we do to "make a living," and what we do when work is over and we are "free." Of course, that "free" time is most often defined by the flipside of alienated work, i.e. shopping, or other forms of alienated consumption. Nevertheless, it is outside of work that most of us construct the identities that we really care about and that give us our sense of meaning.

Calling what we do as work now "necessary labor" is a confusing misnomer in our society since millions of jobs are a waste of time at best. But if a social movement arises with enough strength to create new ways of social life, then the activities that belong on the list of "necessary labor" could ultimately be decided upon by a new, radically democratic society. Once these tasks are identified and agreed upon, we can go about the business of reducing unpleasant work to a minimum, making it as enjoyable as possible, and sharing it as equally as possible.

Such a new society would eliminate billions of hours of useless work required by The Economy, from banking to advertising, from excessive packaging to unnecessarily wide distribution networks, from military hardware and software to durable goods built to break down within a few years or even months. Hundreds of areas of human

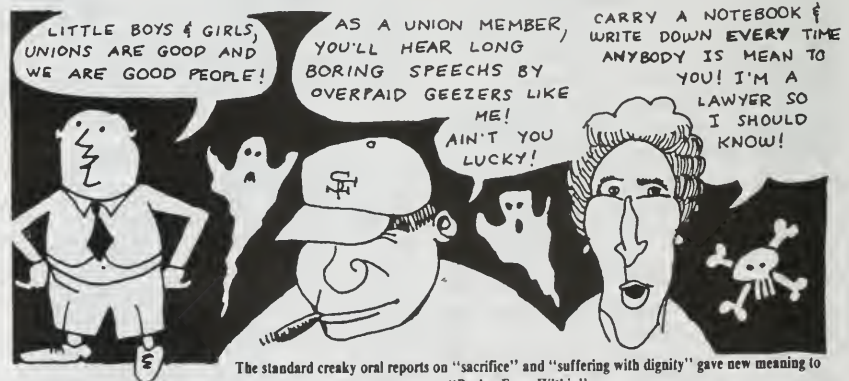
activity can be drastically reduced, altered or simply eliminated.

Imagine how easy it would be to take care of medical problems if there were no money or insurance, merely the provision of services to those who needed them. There would still be medical record-keeping, but it would only track information for health needs, not information to be used for the pernicious ends of insurance disqualification or other standard business crimes. Hospitals would take care of people, not process insurance forms, imagine! With the elimination of so much wasted effort and resources, real needs become much easier to meet. Material security is guaranteed to all. (There's plenty to go around already—but thanks to the market most of us can't afford much.)

With this kind of revolution the wrong-headed demand for "jobs" vanishes into thin air. Instead we are overwhelmed (at least at first) by all the work we need to do to create this new free society—a great deal of it involving the development of many new forms of social decision-making and collective work.

When we get things more or less the way we like them our "necessary labor" will fall to something like an easy five hours a week each. Our free time then stretches out before us with almost unlimited possibilities. Most of us will get involved in lots of different things. As people begin "working" at all the things they like to do, under their own pace and control, society discovers the pleasant surprise that "necessary labor" is shrinking since so much of what people are doing freely is having the effect of reducing the need for highly socialized, machine-like work.

Juliet Schor has discovered some interesting statistics in her book *The*



The standard creaky oral reports on "sacrifice" and "suffering with dignity" gave new meaning to "Boring From Within"...

THEIR REAL JOBS ARE:



Graphic by Chris Carlsson

Overworked American (See review on page 58). A 1978 Dept. of Labor study showed that 84% of respondents would willingly exchange some or all of future wage increases for increased free time. Nearly half would trade ALL of a 10% pay increase for free time. Only 16% refuse free time in exchange for more money.

In spite of overwhelming sociological evidence of a widespread preference for less work and more fun, many people still fervently clutch the work ethic. For them the connection between working and getting paid, earning your own living, is deeply ingrained as a basic element of self-respect. This sense of self-respect is extremely vital knowledge for human happiness, but somehow capitalism managed to link it to *wage-labor*. They want us to express our self-respect through our ability to do *their work, on their terms*. We deserve respect, from others and from ourselves, but not because we can do stupid jobs well. When that happens our self-respect has been bought and sold back to us as a self-defeating ideology.

Nobody ever does anything that is truly "theirs." Every part of human culture and daily life, especially work, is a product of millions of people interacting over generations. The fact that some individuals invent things or "have ideas" that become influential, doesn't make those breakthroughs any less a social product. That inventor's consciousness is very much a product of the lives and work of all those around him or her, present and past.

If this is true, then what is the basis for enforcing the link between specific kinds of work and specific levels of access to goods? In other words, why do

some people make so much more money than others? More interesting still, in a society freed from the mass psychosis known affectionately as The Economy, what relationship do we want to establish between work, skill, initiative, longevity, etc. and *access to goods*?

Obviously I'm not arguing for comparable worth, or any strategy that gears itself to simple wage increases as a goal. In the exchange of wages for work we lose any say over what work is done and why; at this point in history we must redesign how we live, and we have to do it intelligently or we will surely not survive as a human civilization (it's barbaric enough already!).

A prosperous global society that is not dominated by a world government *and* is fun to live in, *and* doesn't require an abstract devotion to work for its own sake, is within our grasp. We have to think about the social power that still lies at work in spite of our desire to transform it into something quite different. If we are not organizing ourselves on the basis of our jobs, how do we begin to make real an alternative movement based on what we do value? How can this new "labor movement" grow organically out of our efforts to subvert the current system?

The unions, from conservative to "radical," still believe in and insist on the centrality of the work ethic. They cannot conceive alternatives to the work-and-pay society because as institutions, unions are embedded within and defined by that society. Radicals clinging to the security blanket of "workers' organizing" (especially in the hopeless direction of rank-and-file trade unionism) are embracing a dying society and its obsolete division of labor. Why pursue at this late date the stabilization and maintenance (let alone improvement!) of a deal with capitalism, when it's clearer than ever that we need deep, systemic change that goes beyond mere "economics"?

Never has it been more appropriate to place on the front burner the classic critiques of wage-labor and capitalist society. The work ethic is a perverse holdover from the worst extremes of the narrow puritanism that contributed greatly to the founding of this culture. The compulsion to work—for its own sake and as an ideological cattle prod—is the battery acid that keeps this society afloat even while it leads to widespread corrosion within our hearts, relationships, and neighborhoods.

Although I attack the work ethic, I do

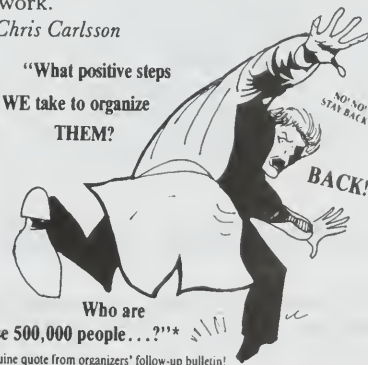
not attack hard work. Without doubt, a free society will be a great deal of work, involving both the free, creative and fun stuff, and a fair share of the grind-it-out rehabbing, reconstructing, and reinhabiting of our cities and countrysides. People are not afraid or incapable of hard, worthwhile work. Even the most onerous tasks can be made more enjoyable. Many, if not most, enjoy work, in reasonable and self-managed doses. But few are able or willing to give that passionate extra effort when they are being paid to do a job all their lives. Degradation accompanies being left out of basic decisions about how you spend your life, and perpetually being told what to do.

Most of us go through life without finding meaning or satisfaction at work, or if we're really lucky, we get some in small amounts now and then. The good things that happen at work in this society are almost invariably IN SPITE of the organization, its activities, and the way it's run. When real human connections are made and real needs fulfilled, that is the essence of what all work should be. Of course it will be difficult to feel that way about lots of important things, like tending toxic waste dumps. But society's goal, and the target of a new social opposition, should be a good life for everyone. An ecologically sound material abundance, based on non-mandatory but widely shared short work shifts at democratically determined "necessary labor," is possible right now.

The forms of our political activity and direct resistance must take seriously the basic questions of social power. It's pretty obvious who's got the guns and that they're comfortable using them. We'll never win a military conflict. Pleasure is our strongest weapon. Life could be so great! Symbolic efforts may be useful at first, but if we are serious about radical change we will eventually have to grasp the levers of power found at work.

—Chris Carlsson

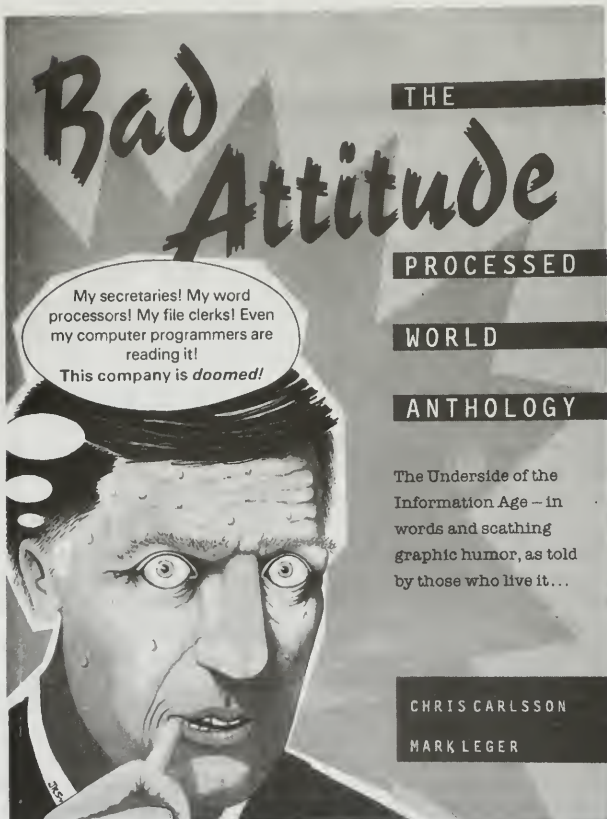
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